



ZappyCat Zine



DEDICATED TO OUR LOVING SHINKAMI FAM

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YOU'VE CAT TO BE KITTEN ME RIGHT MEOW DADZAWA

Tags: friends to lovers, coming out, identity crisis ish but not really, kitten rescue, dadzawa, Kaminari denki has adhd, extremely background krbk and tddk, class 2A, canon-compliant

The elevator dinged as the doors slowly swept open, and Denki stepped out onto the fifth floor. He'd never really had a reason to come up here before, so he worried briefly about whether or not he could find Shinsou's room, but as he looked around he noticed one door was slightly ajar. He skipped down the hall and blew into the room with a cheery, "Hey, Shinsou! Welcome to— what's that?"

"Nothing," he replied quickly, tossing a blanket over a small, moving thing on the floor. In Denki's expert opinion, he looked like he'd just gotten caught doing something he shouldn't have been. "Sorry to sound rude, but if what you came here for could wait another like five minutes that'd be great."

"That doesn't look like nothing," Denki said doubtfully as the lump under the blanket meowed. Wait— "Is that a kitty?!" he near-shrieked in the special voice everyone uses for unexpected cat encounters.

For a moment, Shinsou looked like he was going to continue to deny what was, very obviously, a cat, but eventually he sighed. "Come in and shut the door behind you."


As Denki hurried to comply, Shinsou rolled the blanket back and revealed a tiny kitten, not even old enough to be weaned. It was an odd color, with fur a dusty yellow and black streaks along the face and shoulders. Its eyes weren't even open yet, that's how young and small it was. "Shinsou, whered you find it?" he cooed, crouching next to him.

"In a box in an alley. There was a sign calling her a runt and saying the mother refused to feed her, so she was free to take."

"So you, what, stuffed her under your shirt and brought her back here?"

"...Maybe."

"Dude, how are you gonna take care of a newborn kitten by yourself?" The precious baby girl was so small! And all alone in the world! Looking at her wriggling around on the floor, crying (presumably for milk), he felt an intense wave of protectiveness wash over him. He knew, in that moment, that he would happily kill or die for the tiny kitten on the floor before him.



He was brought out of his reverie just in time to catch the tail end of whatever Shinsou was saying. “—so I’d really appreciate it if you didn’t tell anyone about my new cat daughter.”

“Oh, sure. On one condition,” he replied easily.

Shinsou looked wary. “And that is...?”

Denki grinned and looked up at him, finally. “This is our cat daughter now. I take care of her with you and I can come see her whenever I want, deal?”

He visibly relaxed. “If that’s all you want, sure. I could use the help, anyway; this isn’t the first cat I’ve adopted but she is the youngest, so I sort of have no idea what to feed her.”

Denki nodded, already pulling out his phone. “Have you already googled that yet?”

“I was about to when you came in. Speaking of, you never said what you wanted originally.”

“Hmm?” Denki absently looked up from his phone. “Oh, I came to welcome you to the class! It’s gonna be great working with you, Shinsou!”

Shinsou looked thrown for a moment, then he slowly nodded and replied, “Likewise. So, first order of business is to figure out how to keep a precious adorable kitten alive.”

Denki nodded. “And I know just the place to start our search— Wikihow.”

“And Wikihow is best because...”


“Oh my dear Shinsou, never underestimate the power of a free online database of how-to articles written by members of the global community who just so happen to be experts in whatever they’re writing about, complete with the greatest instructional illustrations known to mankind since the Vitruvian Man!” Proudly, Denki tilted his phone just enough that Shinsou could see the less-than-stellar drawing of a cat being fed that occupied the screen. Shinsou shot him a look.

“Right.”

Denki chuckled and tilted his phone so he could see it too. “Alright, maybe the drawings are...”

“Subpar.”





“Damn, Shinsou! That’s just cold,” he laughed. “But the information itself is solid. How do you think I managed to survive this long? I owe Wikihow my very life, and if I have any say in the matter, so will our cat daughter.” Questionable art aside, the article was clear and informative. Denki furrowed his brow and gnawed on the skin around his thumbnail. “We’re gonna have to go get some things for her, aren’t we?”

“Looks like it,” Shinsou muttered. “Kitten formula, bottles, some wet food and of course she’s gonna need a litter box...”

“Yeah, but for now we just need the formula and the bottles. Who’s gonna get that?”

“I’ll go. I know a good pet store close by, if I leave now I can be back before five.”

“Alright. Oh, wait, before you go, give me your number.”

Shinsou paused mid-rise and sat back down. He didn’t say anything, just held his phone out and looked at Denki questioningly. “This way if one of us thinks of something she needs while we’re apart, we can coordinate easier,” Denki explained, returning Shinsou’s phone with his number saved under Cat Dad Number 2.

“If you say so.” He stood then, and grabbed his wallet and jacket as he walked to the door. “Alright Kaminari, I’ll be back soon. You stay here and keep an eye on her.”

“Will do! Ooh, if I come up with a name for her while you’re gone, can I name her?” Denki asked, only half-paying attention to Shinsou.

“This is our cat daughter, I reserve the right to veto any and all names. However, I extend that right to you as well, being that you are Cat Dad Number 2.”

“That’s not a no~” Denki sang, laughing when he heard Shinsou’s answering sigh. The door shut, and Denki was alone with a small cat. His phone dinged with a text notification.

Unknown Number: make it a good name

Denki chuckled to himself and saved his contact as Purple Dad, then set his phone aside and turned his full attention to his tiny kitten daughter. Wikihow had told him to keep the kitten warm, and Denki figured the best way to do that was to cuddle with her under his shirt. After a few moments, she started wriggling around, tiny claws tickling at his skin, blindly moving up his chest to his throat. He giggled at the sensation. “Stop that, we don’t have any food for you yet.” He reached a hand up and carefully stroked her head with his index finger. “Don’t worry, your purple dad will be back soon with your formula and everything else we need.”

And she didn't stop. Frowning, Denki reached for his phone and opened the Wikihow again, desperately searching for the thing he forgot. *No cow or goat milk, don't make your own formula, special feeding equipment, treated milk for dehydration— ah!*

“Like father, like daughter, I guess,” he chuckled. “I, too, am thirsty most if not all of the time. Unfortunately sweetheart, I don’t have any way to get you liquids.” Brow furrowing, he chewed on the inside of his lip as he thought.

“can you give kittens water with a washcloth” was his next Google search, and all he got were results on how to give newborn kittens baths, which wasn’t exactly helpful. “Tch.”

Woah there, you're hanging out with Bakubro too much. What's next, gonna start going to bed at 8:30? He closed the tab and went back to chewing the inside of his lip.

“how to sterilize a washcloth,” he typed into a new tab, and soothed the still-crying kitten as he read.

The sharp click of the doorknob turning had Denki tensing up slightly and subtly angling his body to block his daughter from the door. He relaxed when Shinsou stepped through, two white plastic bags in hand, and shut the door behind him.


"I'm back," he said, dropping his jacket onto the bedpost. "I take it nothing horrible happened."

“Welcome back!” Denki chirped. “She was great, a little thirsty, so I DIYed a feeding system to get her treated milk. She’s sleeping now,” he finished, tugging his shirt collar down enough to show Shinsou where she was curled against the hollow of his throat. “Oh, this is Bolt, by the way.”

“You just named her after yourself, didn’t you,” Shinsou sighed, sitting on the bed, leg knocking into Denki’s shoulder.

“Shinsou, I am shocked and appalled that you would think so—yeah, alright I named her after my hero name,” he conceded when Shinsou raised his eyebrow at him. “But, hear me out here, she looks like a lightning bolt. Also, you took her from the box and then you had to bolt, right? Everything’s coming up Bolt! Plus, it was Bolt or Ophelia, and I really didn’t think that naming her after a murdered noblewoman was a winning idea, all things considered.”

Shinsou shot a curious look down at him. “I didn’t know she was murdered. The only versions I’ve read said she killed herself.”



Denki drew a long, slow breath in through his nose, then turned and handed Bolt off to Shinsou. “Hold her for a hot sec, yeah? I’m about to learn you a thing. Sure, it’s written that she killed herself, but who came bursting in with the news? Gertrude. When did she do it? After Ophelia went nutso and started spilling the tea about Gertie and the OG murder uncle. And the whole story of how she died is super sus, too, like—” Denki hopped up and started to pace around the room, hands flying around his head as he spoke, “—where were her handmaids? Why was Her Royal Bitchiness the only one around to see what happened to poor, mad Ophelia? She saw what she was doing by the stream and she did nothing!! I—”

He froze mid-sentence and realized exactly how quiet the room was in the absence of his impassioned rant. Blushing slightly, he turned to where Shinsou was reclining on the bed. “Sorry,” he said, carefully quiet, hands fidgeting. “I have a lot of feelings about Hamlet.”

“You know a lot about Hamlet.”

“Thanks, it’s the hyperfixation. I know a lot about English and American classic literature in general, I just sometimes forget not everyone else cares. So,” he said, plopping himself down next to Shinsou, “you got the goods?”

“Right here,” he replied, nudging the bags with his foot. Cocking his head to one side, he regarded Denki for a moment. “If you keep talking about how Gertrude actually murdered Ophelia, I’ll feed Bolt.”

Denki stared at him. “What.”


“I didn’t stutter,” he shot back, already moving to rummage through the bags.

“No, Shinsou,” Denki said, sitting forwards and grabbing his arm lightly. “I don’t think you’re aware of the power you’re giving me. If I have a captive audience, I’m not sure I’ll ever shut up. Are you sure?”

“Kaminari,” he said, pausing his movements long enough to turn and look Denki in the eye, “talk.”

He pursed his lips and released his arm. “Alright, just let me know when you get bored and I’ll stop. Now, where did I leave off?”

“She saw what Ophelia was doing—”



“—over by the stream, and she did nothing!!” Denki chimed in as Shinsou returned to the bags, pulling out a container of powdered kitten formula as Denki hopped up again and resumed his ranting, pacing, and hand-waving. He lost track of time as he talked, but when he finally finished he dramatically flung his arms wide from his position in the center of the room, releasing a few sparks from his palms as he did. Then he realized he was shooting sparks from the ends of his hair, too, and he hastily clamped down on his Quirk. Once more he turned to where Shinsou sat, feeding Bolt, eyes intently fixed on her mouth and nose. Denki slumped a little, but he forced some sort of cheer into his voice. “I told you to let me know when you got bored,” he said, flopping into the desk chair.

“And I would have told you if I was bored,” Shinsou replied instantly. “I was multitasking.”

“Oh,” Denki replied. He sat up and clasped his hands between his legs, resting his elbows on his knees. He almost apologized for rambling, then switched it to, “Thanks for letting me rant about Shakespearean literature for a—” he paused to check the time “—half an hour, total, ish.”

“No problem. It’s kinda soothing, actually. Now, we need a schedule for feeding Bolt during the week,” Shinsou responded, carefully setting Bolt down on his bedsheets and placing the now-empty bottle on his nightstand. Denki picked it up and moved to the bathroom to wash it out, talking as he moved.


“Wikihow said we had to feed her a little bit every few hours, right? Well, we have breaks in-between classes, so that shouldn’t be too much of a problem,” he called over the sound of the faucet. “The biggest problem is gonna be making sure we have enough formula made at the beginning of every day for her.”

“No, the biggest problem is how we’re gonna make and heat up formula in the fifteen minutes we have between classes. It all has to be freshly-made formula, remember?”

“Oh. Right,” Denki replied, crestfallen. “This means we need backup. Someone with a fire Quirk, like Todoroki.” He shut off the tap and started drying the feeding equipment, carefully patting all the water off. Then he registered what he actually said. “Wait, that’s perfect! I’m pretty sure Todoroki likes cats, too, and if we swear him to secrecy then he won’t tell a soul! What do you think?” he asked, stepping out of the bathroom and back into the dorm room proper, raising his eyebrows expectantly at Shinsou.

He looked less than thrilled. “I don’t like the idea of adding a third person to the mix, Kami-nari.”

“He gets minimal involvement, plus he doesn’t get access to Official Cat Dad Rights. Besides, do you have a better idea?”





“...No. Fine,” he sighed, still frowning, “ask him if he’ll help.”

“Will do!” Denki chirped, already pulling out his phone. “Now, how are we gonna handle the schedule?”

They agreed that Shinsou would have Bolt with him for the first week. It would be too suspicious if they both disappeared during every break, so while Shinsou would slip off to feed Bolt or help her pee, Denki was stuck behind talking with the squad and trying to act normal. Todoroki did agree to help, so he went with Shinsou after every other class, though they did come back at different points during the break to throw off any suspicion.

Next week, it was Denki’s turn to have Bolt. The hardest part wasn’t that he had to remember to feed her, or trying to sneak away to do so during their breaks: no, the hardest part was trying not to spend the entire time playing with her when he should be paying attention to whatever Ectoplasm or Present Mic or, worse, Aizawa, was trying to teach. It certainly didn’t help that she was making muffins against his ribs, poking her needle-sharp claws through the special pocket he had sewn to the inside of his jacket. Shinsou had a near-identical one in his. They had made them together one night, shortly after discovering they kept roughly the same hours. That was when Denki learned that Shinsou was secretly the funniest person Denki had ever met. Shinsou’s humor wasn’t corny and meme-filled like Denki’s, or reliant on physical gags like Ashido’s, and it wasn’t witty and wordplay-intensive like Bakugou’s. Instead, it was almost pure satire, full of cutting remarks about idiot politicians and dickhead celebrities. The impression he had done of the American president that night had sent Denki into a gigglefitt that threatened to wake up Iida next door. It was also the first- and last- time that Denki had seen Shinsou smile. Shame, it’s such a nice smile. If he did that more often, he’d have half the girls in this school wrapped around his little finger without ever opening his—

“Kaminari, thank you for volunteering.”

Aizawa-sensei’s bored voice snapped him out of his thoughts, and he found to his horror that the entire class was staring at him, the squad with sympathetic grimaces and everyone else with a mix of barely-suppressed amusement and blank indifference. His face was hotter than Bakugou’s favorite curry when he straightened and asked, “Sorry, sensei, could you repeat that?”

Thankfully, Aizawa-sensei didn’t say anything beyond “I asked for someone to pay attention to the board.” The class burst into giggles and Denki felt his face grow impossibly hotter.

“Yes, Aizawa-sensei. Sorry,” he managed to get out. Aizawa said nothing, just hummed in that way he did. For one brief, shining moment, Denki thought he was in the clear.



Only for one moment, though, because then Aizawa said, “Talk with me during the break.”

“Yes, sensei,” Denki replied glumly. Good thing I’m not feeding her this time around. The rest of the class passed in a blur and suddenly it was over, Aizawa dismissing everyone; Denki couldn’t let himself get swept up in the flurry of chatter and movement around him as Aizawa-sensei caught his eye and nodded towards the door. Heartbeat echoing in his ears, Denki followed. On the way he briefly locked eyes with Shinsou and sent what he hoped was a reassuring grin his way, before sliding the door shut behind him.

Outside the hallway was quiet, only a muffled hubbub getting through the door behind them. Denki couldn’t help but think of the old saying In space, no one can hear you scream. Of course, that meant that as the only thing he could hear in his head, and almost missed when Aizawa-sensei started, “You’ve been spacing out often this entire week, Kaminari. What’s going on?”

“Nothing,” Denki lied, then winced internally at how obvious the lie was. “I mean—I don’t know. Maybe nothing? Things just seem more...it...” he shook his head, frustrated at his brain and how he couldn’t just focus well enough to come up with a lie to cover his ass—wait, focus! He let his shoulders slump, dropped his gaze to the floor, made himself as small and contrite as he could while he constructed his story. “I misplaced my meds earlier this week and I haven’t been able to find them yet. I was hoping they would turn up by now so I wouldn’t have to tell you and get a refill.” Mentally Denki crossed his fingers and held his breath, hoping that Aizawa would buy his story and he would get off scot-free.

Gaze still fixed on his sensei’s pant cuff, he mentally rejoiced at the weary sigh. “Kaminari, aren’t they sitting in the cabinet in the boy’s bathrooms in the dorms?”

Denki let himself frown at that, like he was mentally conjuring an image of the cabinet. Going perfectly so far. His face relaxed into a flat smile and he met Aizawa’s eyes again. “They’ve been there the entire time, haven’t they?” The only response he got was a silent nod, and he sighed a little through his nose. Feigning an apologetic look, he asked, “Sensei, can I run back to the dorms real quick to take my meds? I know the break is almost over, but like—”

But you need them,” he finished. “Fine, I’ll tell Ectoplasm-sensei to excuse the lateness.”

Denki didn’t have to fake the joy and relief in his voice when he said, “Thanks, sensei!” He turned and started jogging slightly to the stairs, careful to not jostle Bolt too much.

“Kaminari,” Aizawa called behind him. Denki paused mid-stride and looked back questioningly, hiding the slight spike of panic. “The dorms are the other way.”

Ah. Right,” he chuckled, pulling an about-face. “Thanks, sensei,” Denki called as he passed. Aizawa just shook his head tiredly.

Left turn, right turn, and...home free. Slowing to a leisurely walk, Denki pulled out his phone.

Me: dw its Gucci, aizawa still doesn't suspect a thing

Purple Dad: u sure

Purple Dad: ?

Me: ya lol

He clicked off his phone and ducked into the first-floor men's room, carefully checking to make sure the coast was clear before he pulled Bolt out of her pouch. “You almost got Papa in trouble, baby girl,” he scolded gently. She squeaked quietly and stretched in his hands, peering sleepily up at him.

“Ohhh, I'm so fucked,” Denki whispered, feeling his heart twist in his chest.

Me: SHINSOU

Me: [image attachment]

Me: SHE OPENED HER EYESSSSSS

Me: 🙄🙄🙄🙄🙄🙄🙄🙄🙄🙄🙄🙄🙄🙄

Purple Dad: kaminari u cant DO this to me

Purple Dad: ectoplasm JUST walked in >:(((


Me: whoops lol

He put his phone back in his pocket and wet a paper towel to stimulate her rear, so she could pee into the toilet. The first time he'd tried, he almost dropped her headfirst into the water. That had been a heart-stopping morning—and an incident he was silently resolved to never tell anyone about, ever. Business done, he slid her back into his jacket and made his way back to class.

“Damn, Shinsou, I envy your kids,” Denki sighed one afternoon at the start of the fourth week, watching as Shinsou babied Bolt. He didn't say anything, just shot him a questioning look, and Denki took it as his cue to elaborate. “You absolutely spoil that cat.”

He snorted. “Like you don't.”

“No no, I definitely do! But,” he sighed, pushing himself into a sitting position on the floor,



homework completely forgotten, “I don’t know, it’s different when it’s you. I can picture you, five, ten years from now, being the most patient dad with your kid, after a successful start at heroing and finding a nice girl to settle down with.”

“There might be a bit of a problem with ‘finding a nice girl’. Especially because of my Quirk and– ah, I’m...” he trailed off, fingers freezing in Bolt’s fur, stuttering as he tried to come up with the right words. “I don’t– girls.”

Denki didn’t get the hesitation. “Girls?” he asked after a moment, still clueless. “Yeah, they’re great, what about them specifically?”

“I don’t do the– the girl, thing,” Shinsou said quietly, eyes fixed on where his fingers went back to scratching behind Bolt’s ear. “I don’t do girls. I’m gay.”

In Denki’s seventeen years of life, he’d colossally stuck his foot in his mouth dozens of times over. That precise moment blew all of the others out of the water. He felt his face flush, his eyes bug a little, his mouth stretch into a wide, painful almost-smile as he stared at the wall. “Holy shit, I’m an idiot,” he whispered past the hysterical screech building in his throat.


“No, you’re not. You couldn’t know something I haven’t told you, and besides it’s not like I make a big deal out of it. It’s just a fact, like my hair is purple or like I’ve got a weird cat mole on my left foot.”

Momentarily shaken out of his head, Denki stared at him. “You have a cat mole on your foot?”

Rather than answer verbally, Shinsou simply reached down and stripped his sock off. Then he awkwardly stuck his foot up in Denki’s direction, and sure enough, there was an almost-cat-shaped mole on the side of his heel, near his ankle. “Woah. Dude, that’s weird.”

“I know right,” he replied, quickly retracting his leg. “Aww, I’m sorry baby,” he cooed to Bolt as she complained at the jostling from his quick movement. They went quiet, Shinsou apologizing to their cat daughter with kisses and pets, Denki digesting the conversation.

After a few minutes Denki broke the silence. “I’m glad you trusted me enough to tell me,” he said softly.



Shinsou looked over at him, letting Bolt wander away to play with some of her toys. “You’re gonna be a hero, Kaminari. Of course I trust you.” Bolt beeping from the floor caught their attention, and Shinsou grinned at Bolt gnawing furiously at her feather toy in a way that had Denki’s gut flipping. “Is that what you want to play with?” Of course, since she was a cat she couldn’t answer, simply paused to stare at Shinsou before returning to her toy with renewed vigor.

Denki chuckled and reached over to the handle. “Here, let me help you with that.” Shinsou snatched it away before Denki could make contact, and he whined, “Shinsoouuu!”

“You need to finish your homework,” Shinsou said, not even looking away from where he was playing with Bolt. “We can’t have Aizawa getting suspicious because our grades have started slipping.”

Denki pouted and went back to his art homework, and Shinsou laughed. Genuinely, brightly, like Denki had never heard him laugh before, and the sound tugged at his gut harder than ever. For a moment he stared, trying to figure out what that tug was and why he was feeling it.

Eventually he realized, watching Shinsou play with Bolt, that the tug he felt in his gut was the tug he felt when he had crushes on girls. Serious crushes, at that.

Shinsou Hitoshi was not a girl.


Well, *fuck*.



Denki had no idea what to do after his revelation. He stayed away from Shinsou as much as physically possible for a few days—which was useless, given that he was still helping him take care of Bolt. He couldn’t stop himself from texting, however, and Shinsou was always the first one to see any and all cat memes. Likewise, Shinsou kept him supplied with out-of-context Shakespeare quotes and literature memes. Denki loved them more than he wanted to admit, and every message caused more of those confusing tugs. He had no idea what to do, so he decided he was content with the equilibrium he’d achieved.

Of course, people started to notice, not least of all Shinsou himself. In hindsight, Denki shouldn’t have been surprised when Shinsou stepped in front of him as he dropped Bolt off at the end of the school day, blocking his exit.

“What’s up, Shinsou?” Denki asked, clamping down on the butterflies at the proximity.



Shinsou stared at him for a moment before answering, scrutinizing his face for something, and Denki fidgeted under his gaze. “I won’t make you answer me, but...you’ve been avoiding me, and it hurts, and I want to know why.”

Denki mentally slapped himself. Well done dumbass, he thinks you hate him now. He opened his mouth to defend himself, to explain...and immediately backpedaled. *Hmmm, can’t just confess now, I haven’t even unpacked that whole thing yet!* So he floundered, mouth flapping open and shut like a beached fish, hands waving uselessly. “I—I don’t know how to explain, but I can say for one hundred and fifty seven point eighty three percent certain that I don’t hate you or anything,” he finally stuttered out, sitting down hard on the bed.

Shinsou hummed and sat in the desk chair, slowly stroking Bolt as he studied Denki. Everything was silent for a while, while Denki tried not to fidget too much under Shinsou’s scrutiny. Eventually his thoughts grew too loud for the quiet. “Hey, Shinsou...you. Um. You’re gay, right?” Shinsou froze and he blurted, “I’m not like, gonna be weird or anything! I just, ah...um. How did you know you were gay?”

There was a beat of silence, broken when Shinsou took a long breath. “Simple. I got a crush on a guy and not on a girl.”

“So you just...went with that?”


“Yeah, pretty much. I’ve got two dads, so it’s not like I ever thought I couldn’t have a crush on a man. And as I got older I only got more sure that I am, in fact, a gay man.” There was silence as Denki let the knowledge settle. “There’s something on your mind.”

Like just about everything Shinsou said, it was less of a question and more of an invitation. And like just about every other time, Denki found himself accepting. “I think I’ve got a crush on a guy. And that’s never happened before? And. I’m—I’m really confused about it, and I kinda wanted to ask you for help.” Admission made, Denki finally tore his gaze away from where his fingers were knotting into the blankets and looked at Shinsou, just in time to see a pretty flush spread across his face. “What?”

That seemed to snap him out of whatever trance he was in, and then it was Shinsou’s turn to look away. “Nothing. I just— I didn’t know you trusted me this much. Thanks.”

“Dude, I trust you like I trust the rest of the squad! Of course I’d talk to you about stuff like this, man!” *Also, it’s you I think I’ve got a crush on, but we’re not gonna say that...*

“Oh. Well, it’d be helpful if you had a list of questions in mind. If not, there’s a couple quizzes and stuff we could take online to help you.”



“I’ve probably taken them all already,” he grimaced. “Do you, I mean, can I just, like, talk about the kinda feelings I get around him, and you can give me your unbiased opinion on whether or not I’ve got a crush on him or not?”

Shinsou looked to the corner of the ceiling for a long moment. “Yeah, I can do that.”

“Ok. Cool. So, for starters, he’s like, the complete opposite of my type? He’s quiet, and comes off as kinda mopey at first, but if you can really fire him up then he’s actually really cool! And he’s, like, super good-looking too? I mean,” he blushed and dropped his eyes to stare at the wall, hoping he could play it off as residual flusteredness just from talking about his maybe-crush and not from actually talking to his maybe-crush about his maybe-crush. “Even before I got a maybe-crush on him, like I’ve got EYES, yknow? He’s a ladykiller, for sure. And I get this kinda...this almost punch? Whenever I see him? And—”

Denki had no idea how long he spent gushing about Shinsou to Shinsou. It must’ve been at least half an hour though, because the alarm for feeding Bolt sounded midway through. He stuttered for a moment, thrown off by the interruption, but Shinsou just nodded at him to keep going and started preparing her formula slurry himself. It still brought him back to earth, and Denki quickly wrapped up his final thoughts. “So? Crush or no crush?”

“Kaminari, that sounds like way more than a simple crush. You’re in deep with this guy.”

He groaned, long and low, and flopped back into Shinsou’s very comfortable blankets. “Damn. I really should’ve seen this coming, shouldn’t I?”

“To be honest, when I first met you I thought you were bi.”


Denki’s brow creased at the wall. “Bi?”

“Ohh my god, you really are a baby gay,” Shinsou breathed from the corner. Denki’s brow furrowed even deeper, and he propped himself up on his elbows to meet Shinsou’s wide eyes.

“Shinsou, pardon my *fucking* French, but what in the *gosh darn h-e-double hockey sticks* are you talking about?”

“Kaminari, did you think that you could only be gay or straight?” Shinsou replied, leaning forward.

“Wh– no!!” he replied defensively, knowing that was a goddamn lie.



“Come here,” he said, setting Bolt down– to her vocal displeasure– and searching around his desk. “Do you see my laptop anywhere?”

“Yeah, it’s right–here,” Denki replied, grabbing the sticker-coated laptop from the corner of the bed and holding it out.

“Perfect, thanks. Kami, there’s a reason the Pride flag is a rainbow,” he said, waking it up and opening a new tab. That rare smile spread across his face, the smile Denki loved best out of all his smiles, the smile—

Wait.

Loved??

Fuck, Denki was in so deep. But as he listened to Shinsou animatedly explain the various orientations, the identities unified under one explosion of color, he felt no worry or uncertainty. He didn’t even notice as the light faded from the room until they were left in semi-darkness.

No, all he felt was some mix of contentment and quiet joy, a unique blend he could only pin down as love.

.....

The next two weeks were simultaneously the best and worst of Denki’s life.


Every day he woke up with butterflies, expecting the message from Shinsou that he’d missed the previous night. He could barely focus in class, eagerly waiting for when he could slip off with Shinsou and take care of Bolt. At the same time, it was agony knowing Shinsou liked Midoriya.

He had never outright said anything, but one night they were talking and Denki asked him if he had a crush at the moment–hoping, of course, that he would say *yes, I like you, do you want to date me?* or something else along similar lines.

He didn’t.

Purple Dad: there’s one guy. hes really cute, basically sunshine personified, and was one of the first ppl to accept me as a hero

Purple Dad: don’t think he likes me back tho :/



Midoriya. Of course, who wouldn't like Midoriya? The guy was entirely too adorable for his own good. For a heartbeat, Denki was thankful Todoroki was dating him and not Shinsou—he felt like absolute shit in the next heartbeat, knowing how much it hurt to see the guy you liked actively liking someone else. That week saw him flip from normal to utter despondency faster than Bakugou could apply perfect winged eyeliner.

That is to say, he did it on a dime and he did it often.

Luckily—or perhaps unluckily—the later days marked the end of needing to bring Bolt everywhere with them. They still had to duck out to feed her, but only during lunch. More often than not, Denki ate with Shinsou and their ever more active cat daughter. They still spent most afternoons together, either doing homework, playing with Bolt, or just talking up in Shinsou's room.

They were doing the latter one fine spring afternoon, about seven weeks after they adopted Bolt. Technically, they were doing homework, but Denki had gotten distracted by something on the English worksheet Mic had assigned, which sent them both spiraling into a tangent Denki was determined to milk for all its procrastinating potential. He was starting to get worried that he had talked the topic to death, when his pocket buzzed.

SeroHan: dude get down here

SeroHan: me n uracho are gonna stick ppl to the ceiling

Me: where???

SeroHan: cr

Denki grinned.


“Shinsou, wanna get stuck to the ceiling with me?”

.....

True to Sero's text, the common room was alive with chatter and excitement. Todoroki and Ashido were already stuck to the ceiling, Midoriya was in the process of getting taped, and Satou was floating, waiting for his turn.

“Sero, don't forget to leave my hands free so I can write my notes,” Midoriya was muttering, already scribbling furiously away.

“Sure thing Mido—hey, Kaminari! Shinsou! Nice to see you two could make it to the party,” Sero grinned.



“Sero, my good mans, get me up on the ceiling now,” Denki replied, bounding out of the elevator and up to the couches. Everyone else on the ground immediately protested.

“No cutting!” Hagakure yelled in his ear, and Uraraka laughed at the face he pulled.

“She’s right, Kami,” she replied, turning to tap Hagakure’s arm. “Take a number.”

“Excellent! Where do I do that,” he replied, turning to the rest of the room.

“I don’t think she means it literally,” Shinsou said. Denki deflated slightly.

“S’alright dude, I think we only have Kouda, Shouji, and Jirou in front of you and Shinsou,” Sero said from where he was taping Hagakure to the ceiling. Then he paused and slapped his forehead. “Shit, wait, Shinsou do you want to get taped to the ceiling? I kinda just assumed, since you came down and all, but you don’t have to!”

“Sure, why not,” he shrugged. “Might as well check ‘got taped to the ceiling by my friend’ off my bucket list while I can.”

“Excellent!” Sero beamed, eyes scrunching into pleased crescents. By that point, Jirou was in the air and Shouji was in the process of getting taped, so Uraraka turned to Denki.


“Ready?” she asked.

“Uraraka, yeet me into the lights,” Denki replied, with all the solemnity and gravitas he could muster, as he grabbed her hand—and promptly lost all his seriousness in the giant grin that erupted on his face as his feet left the ground. “Has anyone here ever seen that old American movie *Mary Poppins*?” His friends’ identical blank looks answered for them, and he sighed a little. “Never mind.”

His feet touched the ceiling, and he shivered slightly at the unfamiliar texture on the pads of his bare feet. Sero swung over to him and he lay flat on his back, spread eagle directly above the coffee tables in the center.

“This good, Kami? Not too tight?” Sero asked.

He nodded. “Yup, all good my dude. You’re getting good at this whole taping people places business.”



With a laugh and a final strip of tape, Sero replied, “Thank the grape. If he had been less of a perv, just think—I might not be this good at sticking people to the ceiling!” They both snorted, and then he was off to tape Shinsou to the ceiling.

“Hey Kaminari, how’re you doing,” came a voice from his left. Denki hadn’t even realized he was so close to Todoroki until he turned his head and saw him a few feet away.

“I feel fucking g-*great*,” he stuttered out, distracted by the way Shinsou’s hair brushed against his right hand. *I’ve been watching too many gay tik toks if ‘I feel fucking gay’ is my knee jerk response to a question.* “How are you, my good Todo?”

“Hanging in there.”

It took a moment for the comment to sink in, and when it did Denki had the conflicting urges to either hit him or laugh hysterically. “Todoroki, if you’re making puns then I’m afraid you’ve been spending too much time around Bakubro. Are you trying to apply to the Bakusquad?”

“The Bakusquad would be lucky to have me,” he responded instantly.

Denki snorted. “That’s the spirit.”


Anything else he might have said was interrupted by the ding of the elevator opening, and the subsequent arrival of Yaomomo, Iida, and Tsuyu. “Aw, fuck,” Todoroki commented blandly when they walked in.

Half the common room gasped and the other half oohed at that. Ashido went so far as to stage-whisper “Todoroki said the fuck word!”

He shot an impressively deadpan look her way and said, “Yes, Ashido, I know how to use the fuck word. I’m rich, not pretentious.” After a pause, he added, “No offense, Yaomomo, Iida.” It was almost lost in the outbreak of laughter and playfully shocked exclamations from the rest of the gathered crowd.

Denki himself couldn’t resist adding, “He comes off kinda mopey, but once you get Todoroki fired up he’s actually really cool!” through a chuckle.

Their conversation about Todoroki’s pottymouth was cut off by Aizawa-sensei’s voice from the doorway. “Whatever ill-advised shenanigans you problem children are getting up to, I recommend you stop...”



he trailed off when he shut the door and registered that roughly half his class was taped to the ceiling, with another two in the process of being floated and taped up there as well. He pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed. “I can see exactly how you would get to this conclusion in the name of Quirk training. Sero, Uraraka, Tsuyu, get your classmates off the ceiling, please.” The man sounded so utterly defeated, Denki didn’t know whether he wanted to apologize repeatedly or cackle like a madman. He settled for not complaining when it was his turn to be unstuck and yanked down to the floor.

“If you all are this dedicated to shenanigans after classes are over, maybe I should spend more time on Quirk training during class?” Aizawa-sensei asked once Sero flipped himself down from the ceiling, everyone else safely deposited on terra firma once again. He sighed when everyone, Denki included, refused to meet his gaze. “At least put down padding or something next time, or even better—use an actual training room. It’s why they’re there. Sero, Uraraka, take care of all this tape. Everyone else, I don’t care what you do so long as you do it quietly.”

“Yes, sensei!” they chorused, before making their collective escapes. Shinsou and Denki didn’t dare look at each other until after they were in the elevator. When they did, they burst into unrestrained laughter.

“Dude, I fuckin’ *loved* that,” Denki wheezed. “Todoroki saying fuck? Aizawa being so fuck-ing *done* with our shit? Perfection incarnate.”

“Someone needs to give Aizawa a raise,” Shinsou agreed. “And did you see Midoriya scribbling down his notes? He didn’t even stop while Tsuyu was getting him down.”

“I didn’t notice that,” Denki gasped as the doors opened. “But I’m not surprised, when he gets in the zone like that it’s hard...” he trailed off and stopped in the middle of the hallway. Shinsou took another step before following his gaze and stopping next to him. For a moment, they were silent.

“Kaminari,” Shinsou started calmly, “I can’t remember if we locked the door or not before we left.”

“Yknow what, Shinsou, I don’t think we did either,” Denki replied with equal calm after a beat of silence.

Shinsou’s door was slightly ajar. And as the two boys stepped inside, Bolt was nowhere to be seen.



“...*Fuck.*”

“She can’t have gotten far,” Denki started, dropping to his knees to check under the bed.

“You double check my room, I’ll go check in Kouda’s room first. We split up, I take the top two floors, you take the bottom two, we meet in the middle, whoever finds her first texts the other one,” Shinsou replied, already turning to the door.

“Good plan, Shinsou,” Denki replied absently, but the door shut before he caught his reply. He moved like a whirlwind, like a spark flicking from one electrical node to the next, an electron hopping from one incomplete electron shell to another. Bolt wasn’t there, and his anxiety instantly doubled. “Bolt, sweetie, where did you go?” he whispered as he stepped into the hallway and raced to the elevator.

She wasn’t in the common room.

Or the kitchen.

Or the bathrooms.

Or the second floor.

“Fuck”, Denki swore, barely noticing the sparks positively dripping off his hair as the door opened onto the third floor. He nearly ran headlong into the hallway, but familiar voices gave him pause.

“Aizawa-sensei, I never meant to hide her from you forever.” Shinsou, and he sounded defensive.

“Oh, really?” Aizawa replied sardonically, and Denki didn’t have to see the situation to see the way Shinsou flinched slightly. “Still, it was interesting watching you try to hide a whole cat from everyone for the last two months,” Aizawa mused.

“Y-you knew this whole time?”

“Of course I knew you had a kitten, and if her being here had interfered at all with your grades I would’ve made you give her to me,” Aizawa said.

At that point Denki had heard enough. He rounded the corner and opened his mouth, ready to say something like *You found her!* or *Is she alright?* or *Sensei please let us keep Bolt,*



pleasepleaseplease, or—

“Excuse me sir, but what are your intentions with my daughter?”

In. Perfect. English.

Aizawa-sensei and Shinsou simultaneously turned to stare at him with identical incredulous expressions, though Shinsou had a tug at the corner of his mouth that suggested he was fighting back a laugh. Denki could feel his face growing Kirishima-red and he froze momentarily. “I didn’t mean to phrase it like that,” he muttered—in Japanese this time—and ducked his head a little. As a result he couldn’t see Aizawa’s face, but he definitely heard his sensei’s long-suffering sigh.

“I figured you were helping him,” and Denki looked up again to gawp. “Your squad keeps complaining very loudly that you’re never around anymore.”

Next to him, Shinsou sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. “*Please* don’t say ‘squad’ again.”

“Why not? Do I not pass the vibe check?” He asked the question almost innocently, which made Denki certain he knew exactly what he was doing as he pinned them both with a piercing stare. Unfortunately, the logical analysis was buried under the shock of *holy shit Aizawa-sensei just used vibe check in an almost correct situation.*

Luckily, Shinsou had no such hang ups, and he glared at Aizawa as he responded, “No you don’t. Thanks for finding her, now can we please have her back?”

“You know that I can’t let you keep her. Even if it weren’t against school rules, a cat this young needs to be around other cats in order to be properly socialized. She needs playmates and stimulation, more than you could give her cooped up in a small dorm room for eight hours a day. I’m sure you both have started to learn that by now. And what about vaccinations? Routine vet visits? Have you considered getting her spayed?” Despite the typical, brusque words, Aizawa’s voice was uncharacteristically gentle. Denki deflated and looked at Bolt, purring contentedly in his sensei’s arms. She blinked at him slowly, and he swallowed past the sudden lump in his throat.

“Yeah, we know,” Shinsou said quietly.

“She—” Denki’s voice caught and he cleared his throat before starting again. “She’s only seven weeks, sensei. Can we keep her with us for another week?”



Enough time to get her off of formula completely and to give you time to find a place to take her in?”

Aizawa leveled a long look at him. “Finding a place to take her in won’t be a problem: I was planning on keeping her with my cats. But you’re right—I will need time to get the apartment ready for a new kitten. You know how to wean her?”

“Yeah,” Shinsou said while Denki nodded excitedly. “I’ve weaned orphaned kits before, and we’ve already started the process with Bolt.”

“Good,” he nodded. “You get her for one more week, then she moves in with me.” Decision reached, he made to hand Bolt back to Denki.

As soon as his daughter was back in his arms, Denki started showering her with kisses. “Hello, baby girl,” he crooned. “Did daddy and I not shut the door when we left? And you thought you would see what your dads were doing?”

Distantly, he heard Shinsou ask, “So, after next week we won’t see her again?” He paused in his babying to listen, a stone sinking into his stomach.

“That would be the logical conclusion.”

Oh. The lump in his throat was back.

“Can we. Can we visit her, or something, from time to time?”


For a moment there was silence, and Denki’s question hung in the air like a bubble.

“No. But,” Aizawa answered, “she stays with me during the week, and you get her on the weekends. Provided you both keep your grades up, that is. You both have too much potential to be wasting it on your cat daughter. Clear?”

“Yes!” they chorused, incandescent with joy. Literally, in Denki’s case—he felt his fingertips start sparking and he quickly clamped down on his Quirk so he wouldn’t bother Bolt.

“Alright. Take her back to your room, then.” Clearly dismissed, Denki and Shinsou quickly bowed and hurried away.





The final week passed in a blur. Denki knew he went to class and training, did his homework and slept and ate, but he would blink and go from, say, texting Shinsou to the middle of art history. As a result, Saturday was both completely expected and utterly unexpected.

“Sensei said he didn’t need the litter box, right?” Denki asked that afternoon as they were packing up all Bolt’s toys, food, and other necessary items.

“Yeah, he’s already got two at his apartment,” Shinsou replied from where he was carefully tucking her toys into a box. Bolt loafed on the desk, blinking down at the two of them.

“Great, what do we do with this, then?” he asked, gesturing at the freshly-cleaned litter box.

“I know a place you can donate it,” Aizawa-sensei’s voice answered from the doorway. Both Denki and Shinsou turned to see their teacher standing there, cat carrier in hand. He stepped into the room and Bolt jumped from her perch and trotted over to him, tail held high.

“Then that’s everything, I guess,” Denki muttered, straightening out of his crouch and turning to face him. Shinsou finished with the box and picked it up, moving to stand next to Denki.

“Yup, that’s everything,” he echoed.

Aizawa set the carrier down and opened it, letting Bolt sniff and headbutt his hand before he carefully picked her up and deposited her inside. He stood and accepted her things. “You two have done an excellent job caring for her,” he started. “From what I can see, she’s a healthy weight and seems to have no health issues. Next time, though, leave kitten rescue for facilities who are already prepared to care for orphaned kits, got it?”

“Yes, sensei,” they chorused obediently past matching lumps in their throats.

“Alright. You’ll see her next weekend, then. This isn’t goodbye forever,” he said, and with that he took Bolt and was gone.

Denki and Shinsou had nothing better to do for the forty-five minutes or so between when Aizawa-sensei picked up Bolt and when their movie night started, so they just stayed in Shinsou’s room, silently mourning their daughter. Eventually, though, the time came when they had to drag their sorry, moping asses off the floor and into Kirishima’s room with the rest of their neglected squad.

“We could always just, like. Not go,” Denki offered half heartedly, knowing damn well that they wouldn’t dare skip out on Mina.



Shinsou snorted. “Like we would dare to skip out on Mina.”

“...Shit, you right. Well,” Denki huffed, heaving himself to his feet, “time to face the music, I guess.”

“Oh, perfect, they’re here!!” Ashido yelled as soon as Denki pushed the door open. He grinned and bounced in, her infectious energy already washing away the heavy mood from earlier.

“Kaminariiii,” Sero chimed in, dramatically swaying up from his spot and moving towards him, “is it really you? Truly, time has not touched you, despite the ages it’s been since last I saw your face.”

Clutching his heart, Denki fell into Sero’s arms. “Alas, my dear bro, it’s been eighty-four years too long,” and he would have continued the act if it weren’t for the storm of laughter that overwhelmed them both and sent them to the floor.

Shinsou calmly stepped over the lump of laughing limbs and took a seat on the bed. “Hey, everyone. Thanks for having me.”

“Of course, bro! You’re squad like Jirou is squad,” Kirishima replied, nodding over to where Jirou was curled up with Mina on Sero’s bean bag chair. She barely looked up, simply waved one of her ear jacks in acknowledgement, and continued fussing with the laptop to get the movie situated.

“There we go, everybody shut up and pay attention to the movie,” Jirou said, carefully positioning the laptop on Kirishima’s desk so everyone had a clear view of the screen. Some generic romcom started playing, and Sero and Denki groaned.

“You let Bakugou pick the movie this time?” Denki grouched, settling into the spot next to Shinsou.

“It might’ve been your turn, dipshit, if you had bothered to show up for the last few movie nights,” Bakugou shot back, thwacking the back of Denki’s head with a pillow.

“Pipe down, peanut gallery, they’re talking!” Jirou snapped. Denki mumbled a sorry, sorry under his breath and Bakugou grumbled out an apology of his own, before they fell silent and turned their full attention to where the main girl was having a Very Serious Argument with, presumably, her boyfriend



“Hey look, it’s you,” Kirishima chuckled, nudging Denki and pointing at the main girl.

“Nah, that’s definitely Deku,” Bakugou cut in.

“Shut,” Ashido hissed, and shut they did. The movie kept playing for a good while, commentaryless until the introduction of Main Girl’s new love interest.

“Shinsou is that you?” Sero gasped.

“Yes,” he replied, and Denki felt himself die inside a little. He knew it was silly, especially since it was just a movie and the characters weren’t even one-to-one perfect matches for anyone in class, never mind Denki, Midoriya, and Shinsou. The rest of the squad kept discussing who, exactly, Main Girl was—Denki or Midoriya. Eventually he couldn’t keep quiet any longer.

“She’s definitely Midoriya, guys! Just add curly green hair and freckles, it’s perfect for Shinsou,” Denki joked to the tune of his breaking heart.

“What in the goddamn hell are you talking about, Kaminari?” Shinsou asked with the oddest blend of irritation and utter bafflement on his face.

“I’m talking about your huge crush on Midoriya!” Denki snapped back, desperately trying to keep the useless, unnecessary tears down.


“Why would you think I’ve got a crush on Midoriya?! I like you, you dumbass, but I never said anything because I know you’ve got a huge crush on Todoroki!”

“Why the fuck would I like Todoroki when you’re right here, you big-brained buffoon?!”

The scene froze for a moment, movie paused, Shinsou and Denki standing nose-to-nose in the center of the room, both of them breathing hard. A stray tear slipped down the side of his nose, and Shinsou’s expression cracked. “Sorry,” he rasped, lifting a hand to wipe it away. “I triggered your RSD, didn’t I.”

Denki uncurled his fists and leaned into the touch, closing his eyes to better focus on his 4-7-8 breathing. “Yeah, a little,” he admitted, “but then again, just about anything can set that off. You’re good.”

“Still coulda handled that better. There was really no need to yell.”



“Yeah there was,” Denki replied, cracking a grin against his hand. “I’m a fucking dumbass who needs stuff yelled into his brain for maximum retention, sometimes. Besides, I was already emotional cuz of Bolt and everything.”

“Holy shit, they’re worse than we were, Katsu,” Kirishima breathed from the bed. Denki and Shinsou simultaneously swiveled their heads to look at him curiously, then over to Jirou when she chimed in.

“Like, hate to interrupt your Moment here, but you both just confessed to each other and now you’re kinda ignoring it,” Jirou pointed out.

Both boys stared at her for a second, uncomprehendingly.

“HOLY SHIT—”

“—YOU *LIKE* ME?!”


“Pardon us for two seconds,” Denki said, before grabbing Shinsou’s hand and dragging him from Kirishima’s room. He marched them both straight down the hall and into the elevator, refusing to look at him until they were safely inside his room. He turned to Shinsou. “Okay, I feel like we said shit that we didn’t quite register or process, and so I’m going to take the time to restate what I said earlier. I like you. I thought you liked Midoriya. Evidently that is not the case?”

Shinsou shook his head and rotated his wrist enough so he could hold Denki’s hand. “Absolutely not the case, I like you and I have since the joint training we did with Class B last winter.”

“Oh.” Denki knew his face was getting red, but it was hard to focus on anything beyond the way Shinsou was looking at him and the fluttery, effervescent feeling growing in his stomach and chest. “Listen, I really really REALLY wanna date you, but I’ve only dated girls before and I’m kinda–kinda scared I’m gonna mess it up.”

Shinsou grinned a little, but Denki could see the pretty pink flush across his nose and cheekbones. “I’ve never dated anyone before, Kaminari. It’ll be an experiment for both of us. Besides, we raised a cat together, we got this dating thing in the bag.” For a moment they were silent, holding hands and breathing in the stillness of Denki’s room.

“Kaminari, I really want to kiss you right now,” Shinsou breathed.



“Then do it,” he replied.

Kissing Shinsou Hitoshi was nothing like kissing a girl. There was no soft flowery scent, no long hair brushing his cheek, no need to dip his head down a little to reach. His face fit in Denki’s hands differently when he cupped it, and Shinsou’s arms, muscled as they were, felt heavier where they wrapped around his waist. The kiss itself wasn’t even that special, just a simple press of lips; and yet, when they finally broke apart, Denki’s heart was racing. Shakily, he breathed out.

“How was that?” Denki asked, half-afraid that Shinsou hated it. *Oh god, he hated it and now he’s not gonna like me anymore and I’ve just ruined any chances of dating him with one kiss, well fucking done Denki you—*

His spiral was interrupted by lips against his. *Oh. Or not, I guess.* Mentally shrugging, he let his eyes fall shut again and leaned into the kiss. He kept them shut, even after they stopped, and let his head fall forwards slightly to bonk against Shinsou’s collarbones. “Does this mean we’re boyfriends now?” He asked after a moment.

“Uh, yeah, I sure hope it does.”

Denki’s laughter was cut short by familiar voices yelling “HELL YEAH!!” on the other side of the door. He yelped in surprise and jumped a little, accidentally shooting sparks off as he did.

“Have you been listening this whole time?!” He turned and yelled through the door.

“Not the whole time, but we heard the part where you both became official!” Ashido yelled back. “Now let’s go lovebirds, the movie is waiting!”

“They’re our friends and we love them,” Denki muttered to himself.

“You mean they’re your friends. I make no claims to any of them,” Shinsou muttered right back.

Denki chuckled and looked Shinsou in the eye. “Bullshit. I’ve seen you and Bakubro being emo in the corner during breaks. With Jirou and Tokoyami, too. They’re our friends.”

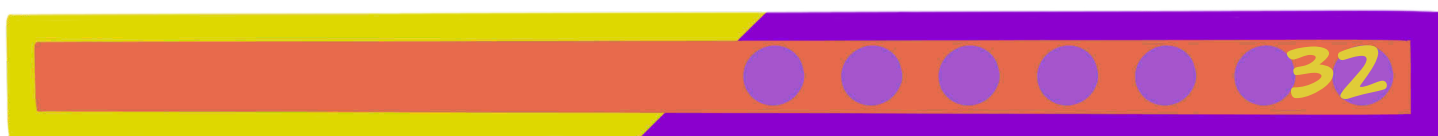
“...Fuck.”



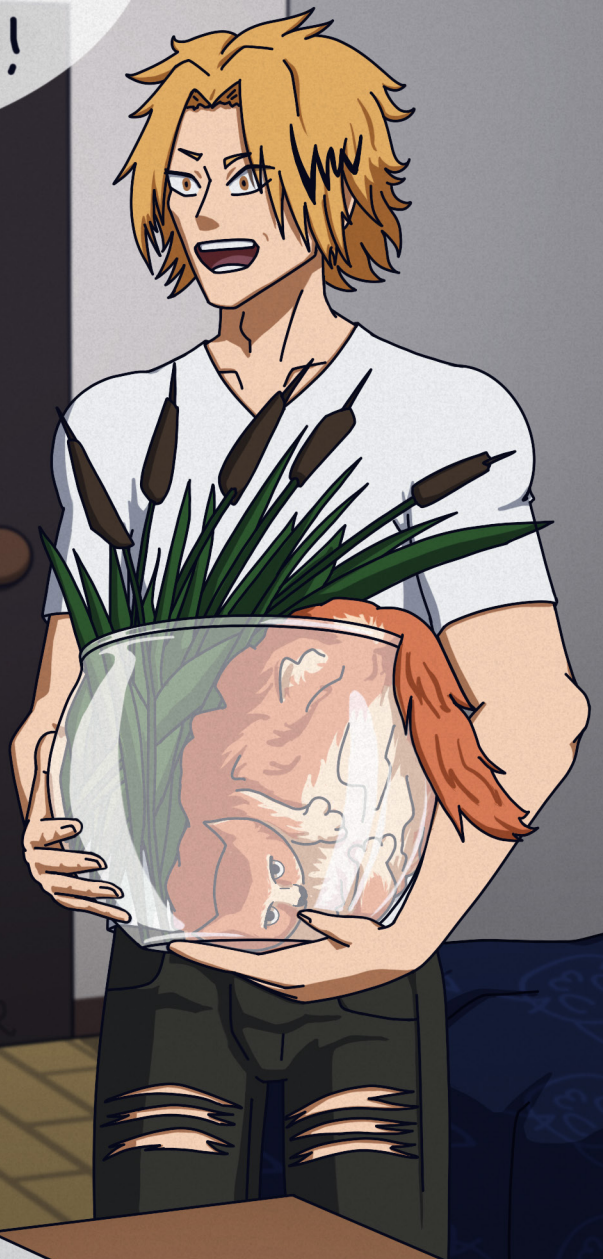


Denki's laughter grew, and he turned and led the way to the door. "Told you so!" He opened the door to see the grinning faces of their friends, genuinely happy, and sent a matching grin their way, incandescent with joy. "Let's go finish a movie, shall we?"

The End



HEY, HITOSHI!
LOOK, I GOT
SOME CATTAILS
FOR YOU!



PROTECTOR

KAWAYLS

Tags: blood, violence, mentions of drugs and alcohol.

“*Kitten*,” Hitoshi’s voice echoes over the phone, nearly shaking. “*Don’t- don’t freak out.*”

The inquiry alone is more than enough to set off the train of fear in Denki’s brain, even through the daze of waking up. Any sane human being can guess that a sudden call at one AM, from someone who’s supposed to be at work, while sounding as terrified as if a gun is shoved to his head - means one thing.

Trouble.

Denki blinks away the last threads of sleep while sitting up, swinging between the realm of dreams and reality. The blanket sags to his lap, exposing his bare, scarred torso.

“What’s-” his voice comes out gruff and heavy with sleep. “What’s wrong?” He manages to squeeze out.

To his surprise, the first answer he receives is a restrained laugh. As if Hitoshi cannot pronounce syllables and has to fill the stretching silence in other ways. It doesn’t ease the building tension in Denki’s stomach.


“Hitoshi?” The tremor bites at his voice, his body is already moving out of the bed. Legs shake off the tangled blanket; he shivers at the autumn breeze lingering through the window, as he searches for his sweatpants in the messy pile of clothes by his bed.

Only now he notices that there are muffled voices in the background, mixed with the wails of... an ambulance? Police cars? His heart skips a beat, face pales at the all too familiar sounds. “Are you okay?!” He gasps, the worst-case scenario starts to play in his sleep-deprived brain without giving his husband the opportunity to reply.

“*Yes*,” lets out Shinsou. “*Wait, actually no- I. Uh. Fuck,*” A pause. “*I- I’m being taken to the police station.*”

Denki freezes in the middle of fighting the hole of his pants with his feet, gold eyes gleaming in the darkness. “Why?”

A dumb question, he realizes one second too late. After all, it is known that after a case, Pro Heroes need to fill in a report and submit it to the police. Or at least, hand in the villain if the



police don't make it to the crime scene. There are a few more reasonable options, but at the moment, a gut feeling tells him it's none of them.

“*Just-*” Hitoshi chokes out, his low voice drowns in a sea of unintelligible yells. “*Just come ASAP.*”

.....

Denki bursts through the automatic doors; heart pounding against his ribcage.

He doesn't waste time acknowledging the tired police officers that greet him in the lobby, instantly sprinting to the staircase. The familiar, gray, mundane walls bore into his back, as if following him as he jumps over the banister. The soles of his sneakers grind the dirty floor each time he makes a turn.

By the time he reaches the third floor, his cheeks are flushed in bright cherry red, and hair sticks to his scalp. Cold and hot sweat drips down his nape as he rushes to the last room in the corridor; his throat is tight and parched.

Not bothering to knock, he bolts inside, the door flying back from the outburst and the door-knob hitting the wall in a loud bang!

Kaminari flinches at the sound.

Gasping for air and placing his hands over his strained thighs, he takes a moment to simply catch his breath, before facing whatever is going on inside of the room.

Hitoshi, still dressed in his hero gear, sits with his shoulders slouched and face as pale as snow. The expression his husband has is a mix of agitation and fear: as if he wants to yell his lungs out while wailing and sobbing. Denki's heart drops. For as long as he has known Hitoshi, he has never seen his husband look so discomposed- so scared.

Whatever it is, it's probably worse than what Kaminari had thought at first.

There's a single table separating his lover from the policeman, with paper sheets and a blood red binder on top of it. A mixed scent of coffee and metal lingers in the sultry air, that makes it hard to breathe.

“Ah,” the police officer wrinkles his nose. “Chargebolt?”



Kaminari stabilizes his breath and leaps to his husband. Wrapping his arms around his shoulders, he's almost thrown aback by the quivers bouncing off Shinsou's frame; while externally looking composed. Usually, he doesn't display much public affection, but right now he could care less - and leans over to kiss the top of Hitoshi's head in reassurance, wordlessly telling him that he's here.

All he gets in response is a shaky breath.

“So what’s the deal?” Kaminari asks a moment later, drawing soothing circles with his nails on Shinsou’s nape.

“They’re accusing me.” The purple haired hero barks out, voice dripping with venom and something else Denki doesn’t want to acknowledge, before the policeman has the chance to build a response.

Blond brows slope downwards into a frown. “Of what?”

Shinsou replies through gritted teeth. “Murder.”



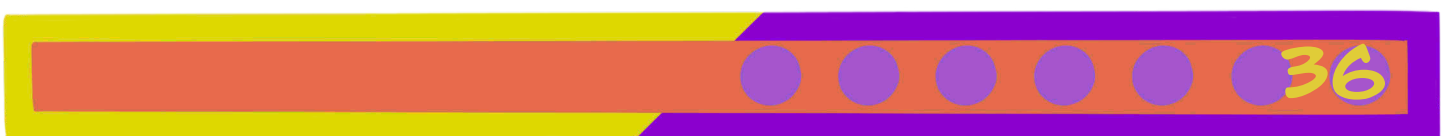
Denki does *NOT* like morgues.


They just radiate an aura of eeriness, giving him the ultimate heebie-jeebies. Whilst as a Pro Hero he has had the pleasure to carry bodies and not once had to help identify them (if they were saved from fire, for example), but that doesn't mean he will ever get used to it. It's what people refer to as moral sense, he supposes.

The main problem, however, is that he's not even sure what he's doing. It's like stepping into the fog and seeing nothing farther than your nose. The kind of unsureness that follows you around like a hungry stray looking for food.

The air inside is thick with the smell of bleach and other unnamed chemicals that make his nose burn. Taking comfort in the fact it doesn't smell like decomposed bodies does little to help, but once again Kaminari is reminded that it's not the first, nor the last, time he's going to visit this place.

Denki sucks in a breath and pushes those thoughts aside, focusing on the man in front of him.





He wears a white gown and purple, thick gloves. The mere look of those fingers smoothing down his hero license makes him wonder how clean they are, and if he should pour a gallon of disinfectant on the card later.

“I see, Mr. Chargebolt,” says the man, snapping Denki out of his bubble. The blond nods, receiving the license back with some caution, yet out of sheer politeness doesn’t comment and slips it into his pants. “What’s the reason behind your request?”

“My...-” Denki trails off, shaking himself. “I mean, an underground pro has been accused of murder, and I was assigned to the case.”

“You’re not a police officer, though. Don’t you have other heroic jobs to do?” Grunts the man, raising a thick, brown eyebrow. Kaminari lets his eyes slip to the dusty name tag on the cloth, barely spotting the letters with the slouched posture of the man.

“Mr. Abe...?” When the man nods in approval, he continues. “The police are overworked and understaffed. So I, out of the goodness of my own heart, have decided to help the police with this investigation. As a Pro Hero I am bound to help anybody, that includes my colleagues. I kindly ask you to show me the body, so I can leave this place as fast as possible.”


Abe looks satisfied with Denki’s eagerness to leave, if the dry expression he casts over the blond is anything to go by. “If that’s the case, follow me.”

The white corridors are long and empty. It’s like walking in a frosty forest where the trees have been uprooted, destroyed, with the temperature biting the cold zero. The floor almost shines and he feels guilty for stepping on it with his dirty shoes. Light pours from the occasional plus shaped windows, lined up like prisoners, littering silhouettes of blue and black.

More than that, the place is shamelessly naked. The chemical smell grows thicker, curling in his nasal sinus and he cringes. He would much prefer the smell of the sewer over this, but he didn’t come here to complain. Refocusing on the mission ahead of him, he follows the man into a square room at the end of the corridor, feeling how his palms start to get clammy despite the cool temperature inside.

The man paces toward the center of the room. An examination table stands there, covered by a thin layer of white cloth that prevents Kaminari from seeing what is under. The moment Abe pulls the edge Kaminari flinches, feeling the way his stomach shrinks and drops to the pit of his guts.

What he sees is the body of a man in his late forties, wearing a blue gown that hides his figure



underneath. A defined jaw and slim face, with a huge bulb of a nose and nostrils the sizes of flat pins. His eyes are closed shut, face cleaned from blood; yet the bruises stand permanently above his skin in their swelled up glory, telling the story of a nasty fight that led to this unfortunate outcome.

Vaguely, Kaminari notices another person in the room - a woman, with dark navy hair gathered into a messy bun, and a white coat to her knees. She sits in front of the computer a few inches away, typing whatever.

Forcefully refocusing on the body, Denki takes a shaky step forward as he silently observes the way the man is beaten up; and compares Shinsou's fighting style in his head through moving images.

"What's the cause of death?"

"A crack in the skull."

Kaminari whistles. "Damn."

Abe snorts in contempt, eyes following the same path Kaminari's do. "He was beaten up badly even before he was killed, someone wanted him to suffer. The report says they found him in a dark alley, pushed against a metal bar, with that Underground Pro Hero crouching near him, hands covered in blood."

"I know," mutters the blond. Something isn't right here - why would Shinsou kill a man without a reason? It's none of his targets, and he wasn't on a mission - a simple patrol in the city. No reason for him to kill a random dude in the middle of the night.

"What about fingerprints?"

"The only prints found on the body are on the victim's shoulder and match the pro," Abe shrugs, then throws his head over his shoulder. "Doctor Amari, can you come here for a second? It's your case, after all."

Denki glances at the woman that stands up, visibly irritated by the disruption. Her heels click with each step she takes; gray eyes focus on the frowning blond. "How can I help you?"

"Where's the evidence that the pro was the one to kill him?" he asks in a demanding tone, crossing his arms over his chest. Call it dominance assertion, but Denki gets annoyed with how blase they are. Fairly, they don't care about Hitoshi as much as he does, but any idiot can



tell there's something fishy going on.

The accusation is, presumably, contrived. It has no solid evidence nor leverage and is put in a way that Shinsou has no alibi. Even if he was on the scene, it doesn't mean there isn't a third side to the story, that they simply overlooked.

"The only thing we know is his split skull. With the way the pro looks, one kick is more than enough to kill the man. Moreover, we trust the police. You brought the questions to the wrong place."

"No, I didn't," he feels like a kid that wants candy but his parents won't let him. Instead of bickering back, he casts another long look at the dead man, desperate to find something that can turn the wheel.

"We can't help you prove him innocent. The blood on his hands belongs to the victim," the word stings more than it should have. "Not to mention that his alibi places him at the scene of the crime. If you're here solely for that, then you're wasting my time-"

"White," Denki cuts her off.

"Pardon?"

No explanations needed - he simply grabs a strand of *white* hair resting atop the victim's neck slowly bringing it up for the morticians to see. Abe and Amari fall silent, as the man frowns and the woman raises a skeptical eyebrow.


"If the pro was the one to kill him, then maybe the hair would be purple, but white? I don't think so. You better check it out, or-"

"Sir, I understand that it's hard for you-"

"-or," Denki repeats, "*you* are going to have to explain to your boss why your lab is on fire."

Ms. Amari takes a deep breath, massaging her temples, and opens her mouth. Then, she closes it, making a weird noise at the base of her throat. She and Abe exchange brief glances. "Results will be in three days, sir," The defeated look on her face is more than enough to satisfy him, so he grins childishly while tucking his fists into his pockets.

"Thanks, *doctor*."



It was definitely **not** a surprise when the test results came back negative. Meaning, there was at least one other person to have encountered the victim that night.

Denki is this close to throwing fists with someone, because it's obvious that something is wrong. Yet, upon giving the results a quick look, a pit forms in the bottom of his stomach as he reads the paragraph at the end of the document:

...I checked the DNA and found only one match in the system: a woman who was considered to be dead for six years. Her name is Himari Kuroda, I attach her file down below...

The rest isn't important, Denki realizes, as the information settles in.

What catches his attention is the name. *Himari Kuroda*. Without even reading the rest of the email, he slams his finger on the mouse, clicking on the link that throws him into the file. There's an image of a woman, no older than him, with long, wavy white hair that divides asymmetrically on her forehead; and a pair of narrow, mischievous, pink magenta eyes.

His jaw almost drops open at the image. This woman is supposed to be dead.

As an Underground Pro Hero, Shinsou had gotten some...less than ethical jobs. If a villain was causing too much trouble for the mainstream Pro Heroes, an underground hero would get assigned to the case; and sometimes it involved taking them out. Hitoshi hated that part of the job, but he always made sure the target was taken out before he left. The fact that a villain he had taken down long ago is responsible for murdering a man sets his nerves on fire.

The phone rings and snaps him out of his thoughts. Snatching it from the table, he slides to answer - after a quick glance to check that it's Ms. Amari. Pressing his phone to his ear, he sucks in a breath, not letting the woman squeeze out a syllable before shooting.

"Is this a joke?"

"Good evening Mr. Kaminari, I-"

"Is. This. A *fucking* joke?" He pushes himself to stand, hitting the table with his palm. The half-empty cup of coffee standing next to him quivers. The silence followed from the other side of the phone is enough, and the color drains from his face accordingly.



The silence is heavy, from time to time interrupted by ruffling sheets or shifting of one of the Pro Heroes.

The article offers no new information.

Denki groans in exasperation as he clicks on the next tab, his eyes are burning from all of the hours he spent in front of the computer. If all of this turns out to be useless, he's going to scream. Meanwhile, Eijirou wanders to the back of the room, rustling with some paper.

Denki does his best to ignore it, though with his ADHD knocking on the backside of his mind, the task is almost impossible. However, he handles it decently, up until Eijirou decides to call out for him.

"Dude-"

"I'm busy," he barks out, eyes skimming the text briefly. It's a report filed by one of the useless Pro Heroes that dealt with the case alongside Shinsou. It provides zero new information, just irritating him to the bone.

"But Kami-"

"Not. Now," This time he aggressively hisses. It's hard enough to concentrate, so now Kirishima can't get the clue to shut up and let him clear his husband's name?!

"Kaminari!" The yell makes him jump in a momentary terror as the redhead slams a piece of paper on the laptop screen.

Yet, too blinded by how tired, worried, and angry he is, the blond shoves it away as he darts his eyes at his friend. "What?! You can't see that I'm busy?! It's hard enough to concentrate as is, I don't need you yelling at me!-"

"Fucking read it!"

"Read what?!"

Only then Denki realizes that Eijirou holds a piece of paper. Or more correctly - tries to prevent Kaminari from tearing it apart from how hard he digs his nails into it. A tint of red tips Kaminari's cheeks as he loosens his grip, unfolds the poor paper and reads the headline written in bold, black letters. The paper is wheat colored and stinks like an old newspaper.



The room goes completely silent as Denki reads through it, his face going pale with each passing word.

“Kirishima,” breathes out, gold eyes grow twice their size as he leaps to his feet. “This is-”

“Your first clue?” Guesses the Pro Hero, crossing his arms. If Kaminari wasn’t constantly stressed lately, he would have pouted at the fact that Kirishima looks at him the same way he looks at Bakugou when he attempts to start a fight. But he is, so he just sends an inattentive nod at his friend as he rushes to grab his things.

“Sign out for me.”

“Wait-”

The door slams shut before Eijirou can even finish his sentence.



The bar brings back old memories.

Even after eight years as a Pro Hero, Kamianri still cannot figure out why villains like to claim bars. Is it some kind of dominance assertion, or the aesthetic? In any case, it’s their most creative hideout option, and apparently this time it’s no exception.


Denki wrinkles his nose at the stench of weed and alcohol, but doesn’t let it affect him too much. The long shadows casted by the building all around helps to hide him. It’s dead in those early hours. Even though for normal citizens it’s already the end of the day - obviously, places like this one come to life much later.

But at the moment, it plays to his advantage.

Sure, he’s a flashy Pro Hero with a face known publicly and tons of fans gushing about him, drooling all over the great Chargebolt; however, it doesn’t mean he can’t go underground when needed.

Like... right now.

Tugging his mask higher on his face and the hoodie downwards, he strolls toward the bar examining the area with his eyes.



There aren't many people to recognize his face in any case, not that he lets his guard down. The smallest mistake can be his most dangerous foe, so he blends with his surroundings the best he can until he reaches the front doors of the bar.

From here he can see it's a rather new place that has yet to be coated with layers of dirt and dust. The neon lamps hanging from the inside are turned off, and except some staff members that are cleaning the floor, there's nothing in there to catch his attention. He almost turns back in defeat at the lack of... well, he's not sure what he expects, because expecting the answers to be thrown at him just from one glance is ridiculous. Unprofessional.

However, the moment he swivels his head to look at the sign of 'closed' hanging from his right - someone abruptly grabs his arm. Sharply turning his head, Kaminari takes a step back and almost bumps into the wall, eyes darting to the young woman standing in front of him.

His eyes narrow.

Albino, pale hair, gathered in two messy buns. Cat shaped magenta eyes, framed by a heavy amount of eyeliner, sharp enough to cut through steel. An oversized sweater hangs from one shoulder and ripped jeans that look too tight to be comfortable. High boots, jewelry, and a very, very familiar face.

"Yo, you forget something here?" The woman asks in a stiff voice, crossing her arms over her chest.


Denki's mouth turns dry. There are so many things swirling in his mind as he looks at her, his stomach twisting. However, he's not an idiot, he's well aware that something is off. So instead of drowning in perplexity and agitation, he mentally shakes himself, clearing his throat.

"Sup," he says casually, tucking his fists into his pockets. "This place any good? I always walk past but never gone in," adds, jerking his head towards the entrance.

She raises a skeptical eyebrow, stepping closer to him. "Isn't it a little too early for a drink? There's still a few hours before we open."

"We?" He can't help himself but ask, masking the surprise with a flirty tone. It's unintentional, but he's going to have to roll with it.

"This is a bar for young people who don't give a shit about law," a smirk stretches across her face, as he leans on her hip. "Seems like the perfect place for you, isn't it?" Then, her arm crawls to the mask he wears. A cold stone of discomfort sinks to his stomach, yet he stays stiff



in his place. Her fingers curl on the edge of the mask, angeling it down until it reaches his chin.

“Hm, yeah, I think you can give us a visit. Just come by around midnight and we’ll have some fun,” she winks at him and flicks his nose, then walks inside the bar, slamming the door shut behind her.

Kaminari stays frozen at the doorway, brain slowly processing the information. Ignoring the implication that he has the face of a trouble maker; doubtlessly this was the woman Shinsou was supposed to eliminate. What the hell is she doing? Why would she...?

Averting his gaze to the floor, he rocks on his heels and starts to head back, deep in thought.

Things took an interesting turn, *huh?*

*“Are you **sure** this is your best idea?”*

Denki tugs at the sleeves of the black leather jacket, and runs his fingers through his gelled hair. “I mean,” he tips the little device plugged into his ear, eyes looking over the line of people standing in front of the door to the club. “Taking the bitch, defeating those assholes, getting my husband back. Sounds good to me.”


“*Argh*,” Eijirou whines from the other side, his voice mingles with the rest of the noises coming through. “*At least you’re not jumping into it alone, this time*,” grumbles, dissatisfied with whatever memory playing in his mind.

A little smirk. “I’m heading inside.”

The statement is followed by a grunt from the earpiece, yet no more words to stop him. It’s useless, anyway, Denki isn’t a man who backs off from a mission - especially when his husband’s freedom is depending on it. Taking a deep breath and pulling at the collar of the leather jacket, he swaggers to the entrance; fishing the fake ID card from his pocket.

Their plan is simple. Kaminari plays the role of a reckless young man, leading that woman until she’s unfocused, and when she doesn’t expect it - he strikes. He’s not here to kill her, rather, capture and get answers. Then, throw her in jail. All the while the other Pro Heroes, with Ground Zero’s leadership, take down the rest of the bar.

If it’s a place where villains gather to have fun, then it’s a perfect opportunity to take them out.



Kaminari walks past the guard without ado, wearing a coy smirk when he raises a brow at him. A part of him is relieved that he looks younger than he is; whilst the other part wants to scream that he's older than most of the people over here and they should stop treating him like a dumb kid who just turned twenty and goes to bar for the first time.

In any case, it works in his favour, so he will have to suck it up and cope.

“*We’ve got a hold on the camera,*” Eijirou informs him from the headset, and Denki hums in response, eyes traveling between the sweating bodies. To say that the place is crowded is an understatement - there’s no place to breathe on the dance floor, no empty booth nor stool at the bar. The music is loud, even to Kaminari’s taste.

People’s screams mingle with the beats of the melody, splashes of crystal clear glass are illuminated by long, thick neon lines moving in rhythm with their owners. The strong scent of pot hovers in the air, mixed with the smoke from the machines around the DJ stand. Bright lasers of pink, purple, turquoise, and yellow litter the floor and plain walls, giving the illusion of a color burst.

The closer Kaminari gets to the bar, the louder the tingling of glass echoes in his ears. The bartenders run inside of their framed area, preparing drinks and snacks for the clients. Despite the invasive shoulders and heels that threatened to smash his feet, Denki successfully strides to the bar.

Not batting a single eyelash at the men rushing to do their work, Denki looks around until his eyes lock with a pair of mischievous, pink magenta orbs, greeting him with a delightful smirk. *Bingo.*

Returning an equally teasing yet easy-going grin, he leans on his elbows, hooking one leg above the other and waits. The beat of the music pounds with his heart, as he puts on his best mask, acting according to the persona he chose for this mission. *Damn it, Toshi, you owe me.*

“Hey there, hot stuff,” a sugary sweet voice snaps him out of his thoughts, and he averts his gaze to look at the woman - Himari Kuroda - standing in front of him, behind the bar. A lopsided smirk on her face. “What can I get you today?”

Denki, almost lazily, glances behind his shoulder. Skimming the dancefloor as if he’s deep in thought, he then tilts his head and looks back at her, lacing his fingers together. “I was wondering, if a pretty lady like you can honor me with a dance?” As he speaks, he skilfully flicks his eyes up and down her body, pretending to be engrossed.



Pretend that this is Toshi, is the mantra in his head, if he must be honest.

“Hmm,” she runs her fingers through her albino hair, brushing it behind her shoulder. The smile isn’t fading from her face as she turns her head to one of her coworkers, saying something Denki doesn’t hear due to the loud music. After that he’s met by those magenta eyes again, and his stomach does a little flip of discomfort. “One dance couldn’t hurt, I suppose.”

“Of course, my lady,” winking at her, he steps back, waiting for the woman to exit the bar.

The moment they step into the dance floor, the music changes into a song he’s unfamiliar with. However, the pleased look on her face clearly shows she does.

Now, the hard part: asking questions that will either confirm or deny her identity, starts now.

Kaminari subtly wipes his hands on his pants, just in time to catch her body that nuzzles closer to him. His organs push up puke to his throat - from the smell of the cheap perfume hovering around her like a thick fog, or because he’s a married man with enough self-respect to feel a pang of guilt, even if it’s for the sake of the mission.

“So,” he whispers into her ear, internally cringing at the way she shudders in his arms, as they smoothly move with the bouncy rhythm of the music. “What’s your name, pretty lady?”

Her arms loop around his neck as their bodies are pressing together, and she whispers into his ear. “Wouldn’t you like to know?”


An awkward laugh. “What’s that supposed to mean?” He pouts, even if she doesn’t see him, eyes shifting around. Now, he notices something weird in the atmosphere, yet he can’t put his finger on it.

“Hmm,” sharp nails rub his nape, sending a twinge down his spine. “I think it’s a little rude that you ask for my name, before I know yours?”

Weird, but he won’t argue. His mind fishes the first name coming to him, as he lies easily - the same way smoke seeps from a lit cigarette. “Tetsuya Yamato,” fingers twitch, curling onto her shirt as he avoids a drunk guy’s elbow. “Call me Yama, if you desire, babydoll.”

Oh *God*, he wants to *throw up*

“Azuma Mayo, call me Mayo,” She nonchalantly replies, then tilts her head. Their eyes meet in time for the drop, and someone bumps from the side. Awkwardly moving aside, Denki flash-



es his most charming smile, fully aware of the lie in the form of a woman in front of him. “I haven’t seen you around, you new?”

“Kinda,” answers with a shrug, grabbing her slim hips. “Arrived from the big city, you know? Not that Musutafu is that far from Tokyo, but still,” the shift in the atmosphere presses more on his shoulders, and he tries not to shudder. Something is off, but he can’t even tell Eijirou, who patiently waits with the rest outside to attack.

“And the first thing you do is to join us?” She allows herself to brush his hair with her fingers, smiling sweetly - poisonous apple kind of sweet. “Not that I’m here to judge. With the heroes all around us, you need a safe place where no one is going to tell you what’s right and wrong, how to act, and what to do. Am I right?”

Kaminari unintentionally frowns, spinning with her to the center of the floor. “Not a big fan of heroes, I assume?”

“I was,” she shrugs, hand smoothing down his sweaty neck until it rests on the back of his nape, rubbing it with her nails. “Until I saw right through their bullshit. What’s the point of saving people if they’re just going to stab you in the back later?” The frown on his face deepens, and a knot forms in his stomach, but he doesn’t interrupt. “I graduated from a hero school just to get slapped in the face, and I can’t stand idiots who are like that, yet act righteous. That’s the worst type of hero, don’t you think?”


Pushing down a thick chunk of nerves, no longer focused on the music, or the noise or the people. All he can think about is the implication behind her words, that can’t be mistaken. Maybe it’s not a direct one, but it doesn’t mean he cannot connect the obvious dots.

“Charge, what are you doing there?” Kirishima’s voice is muffled through the device in his ear, going completely ignored as Denki’s hold around Himari tightens.

“So, you’re telling me that you’re hunting them down?” He didn’t mean to say it, but it’s too late to dwell on it when it’s already slipped out of his lips

“I enlighten them,” the casual way she says it throws his stomach to his toes. “I just help them to see the truth they’re trying to turn a blind eye to. However, if they don’t believe me and try to prove me wrong...” a sudden pang of pain bites at his nape as her nails scratch it, and he has to hold himself from wincing. “I let them taste their own medicine,” it’s a barely audible whisper, as she steps closer, lips hovering above the shell of his ear. “And *end* them.”

The unmistakable click of a gun cries in his ear.



Kaminari stops dead in his tracks, and even if everything happens fast - for him, it's as if in slow motion. The moment he feels something cold pressing on his temple, electricity crackles in his ears as he turns around and grabs the muzzle of the gun and points it up to the ceiling.

BANG!

The cracking of the bullet, as it's piercing one of the neon lamps above, is loud and clear, shutting down the music floating in the place. It falters a moment before the light dies out, and Kaminari's eyes glow bright gold as someone screams. His fingers are still hooked tightly on her arm, as they're facing each other.

"Thought I wouldn't recognize you, *Chargebolt?*"

"Huh," he squeaks in what he hopes is not a high pitched voice. "Same goes for you, *Himari Kuroda.*"

Just when he's done pronouncing her name, in the coolest and badass way he can manage, an explosion shakes the place. More screams erupt as the people who have no business with villainy dart to the sides, whilst the villains in the room gather toward the DJ set - the opposite direction of the blasted door, where a row of intimidating Pro Heroes are standing

Ground Zero clasps a fist against a steaming palm, spitting to the side. "Showtime."

Chargebolt doesn't waste time - he has a strict plan to follow, and so he does. While the Pro Heroes stir chaos and havoc, he leaps on the stunned woman, not giving her a single second to react and slams his hand over her neck. This way, he knocks her off, catching her body mid-air and throwing it over his shoulder.

"I'm outta here!" He yells, avoiding a random attack directed his way, as electricity sparks between his legs.

"Go save your husband!" Cheers Red Riot, the closest to him, while punching a villain square in his jaw. Chargebolt signs his famous thumb ups as he rushes out of the hurricane of quirks and shouts, heart like a drum in his mouth. Finding his motorcycle, he hops on it, still holding the unconscious woman as tightly as he can.

There's no time. He has to get to the police station, before they start this damn trial that they arranged way too quickly for someone who was accused recently. But now, with the murderer sprawled on his shoulder, maybe he can stop this shit show.



And get his husband back.



When Denki bursts through the automatic doors of the police station, he can hear his heart pounding in his ears.

The secretary is startled, blinking at him with big, shocked eyes, probably due to the fact that he's still dressed in the party clothes. Ripped jeans that cling to his muscular legs and smoke spiraling from his hair. Face flushed in bright red, some of the makeup Ashido dumped on him is smeared under his eyes - giving him the perfect raccoon eyes every girl dreams about.

Gladly, she says nothing, only sinks into her chair. Not that Denki has time to listen to her, time is running out as he breaths.

Ignoring the way the woman wriggles over his shoulder, probably waking up, he sprints toward the office of the cop in charge of Hitoshi's case. Mr. Yoshiro or whatever.

Tightening his grip around the woman, with all of the papers stuck carelessly into a binder tucked under his armpit, he darts to the door, kicking it open without bothering to knock. Barging inside, a gasp shoots like a bullet, he stops dead in his tracks; breathing heavily.

"I ha- have-" wheeze, "-h- her."

The cop, obviously startled, jumps from his chair and hisses as the wheels scratch the floor from the sharp movement. Kaminari hears a small, "fuck," from the same direction. Gazing toward the desk, he notices a puddle of coffee spilled all over the table and Yoshiro's pants, but he can't bring himself to care.

"Chargebolt," mutters the man, grabbing a napkin from one of the drawers, bringing to his stained pants. "Next time, it would be highly appreciated if you knocked first-"

"Save that bullshit and read this," he says slamming the binder on the table, he flinches at the loud thump followed, but it doesn't stop him from dropping the woman on an empty chair as well. Her eyes are half open, with a foggy expression engulfing them, which means there are a few minutes before she catches up with the situation and starts useless attempts to flee.

Yoshiro glances down at the binder, and with the look of someone who didn't sleep for years or just got back from fighting a black bear, flips it open. A soft groan echoes from Kaminari's right, his eyes dart to check that the handcuffs he carelessly shoved on her are still in place.



“Huh,” the cop rubs his chin, perplexed. “I didn’t know about that... Where did you get this from?”

“The archive, a few hours of searching the net, and old reports,” the blond replies with a shrug. “I’m not blaming anyone, but if I find out that one of you was working with this bitch over here to put my husband in jail,” he nudges with his shoe one of the chair’s legs. “I won’t fucking hesitate,” a dangerous current sparks in his eyes, as the cop nods hastily.

“I will bring it to the chief’s attention, and we will see what we can do about it,” then, he gazes at Himari. “At least we don’t need to chase the villain.”

Kaminari snorts, crossing his arms. “You’re welcome. Now, can I get my husband back?”



When they enter their small apartment, it’s nearing three AM.

Hitoshi has yet to say a word, trailing behind Denki like a lifeless shadow of a man. Throughout their ride back to their house the blond kept silent, letting his shaken husband digest everything that happened - but a little gut feeling told him that this isn’t something that’s going to be solved by just acting as if everything’s alright.

Obviously, nothing is okay.

The only thing heard in the house is the soft creak of the door, the shuffle of the two men getting their shoes off; and the tap tap tap of their cat’s paws, as she greets them from the living room. Her amber eyes follow every step taken, every move made, but more than that - nothing interrupts the silence.

It’s hanging in the air. That dark atmosphere and heavy stillness, as if they’re walking corpses. The heavy weight presses on his bones as he shrugs the soaked, stinky leather jacket and a t-shirt from himself, now half-naked as he walks over the bathroom. He hears Hitoshi padding over to their bedroom, the stillness following him like a snake after its prey.

Washing the makeup off leaves him with a red, slightly irritated face, and wet bangs, that he pulls back with a black hair clip.

Five minutes and skinny jeans that refused to go down his sweaty thighs later, Kaminari marches toward their bedroom, with ice replacing his blood. There has been no sound from there, Hitoshi hasn’t even come to take a bath after spending almost seventy-two hours in a



holding cell.

The worry blooms in his chest as he knocks on the closed door. It's rare that they close the door, only when they're cooking meat or cleaning the house, which just adds more to the buds of concern. No response, so after taking a breath, Denki pushes the door open.

"Toshi?" He calls, softly, stepping into the room. The lights are turned off, and a silhouette of a man in the darkness grabs his attention. Leaving the door half open, Denki takes a hesitant step toward their bed, stopping when his foot sinks in a pile of carelessly thrown clothes. Frowning, he walks around it, each step closer fills him with pain and anger.

Hitoshi sits on the edge of the bed, with his arms wrapped tightly around himself. His usual stoic frame is shaking like a leaf under an aggressive wind, and his head bowed, almost buried in his arms, as if he's trying to hide. The usually intimidating man looks like a little, frightened kid, uselessly defending himself from a non-existent threat.

Denki can practically hear his heart break.


"Hey," he tries again, carefully, kneeling in front of his husband. Placing his hand on Hitoshi's knee, he gives it a gentle squeeze, waiting for the violet eyes to lock with his. However, when they do - they're duller than usual, looking like two moons about to fall, a ghost that has seen everything and accepts its meaningless existence.

"Are you okay?" Still, Denki smiles at him, now sitting on the back of his folded legs and ghosting his fingers on his lover's leg. The second hand reaches upward to brush Hitoshi's messy, sticky hair back, and gives a little, comforting rub to his scalp.

Hitoshi narrows his eyes, averting them to look at the floor. The silence presses over their shoulders, pulling them to the ground with gravity. However, Denki keeps the smile wide on his lips, even if the grimace tips his face; and the rage is brewing in his gut.

He's not mad at Hitoshi, per se, but he can't help the venom curling in his stomach from the mere thought of what happened. It happened so fast, barely leaving a moment to stop and think. Now, that it's almost over, the essence of the situation seeps in, dawning in the form of rocks rolling down a cliff.

Hitoshi was accused of murder because he was the only one there. Because he has a *villainous quirk*, and they didn't even let him speak to defend himself. When Denki came to the cell, he saw a muzzle over his husband's face, and had to hold himself together so as to not punch a hole in the police officer's skull.



Even with the moon being the only source of light in the room, he can see the traces of red skin over the bridge of Hitoshi's nose and cheekbones, a friendly reminder of the cruelty of the people he defends. To think that Hitoshi, an Underground Pro Hero that puts his life on the line, gets such treatment in return?

This is more than enough to fuel Kaminari's exasperation, like seeds curling on the wall and crawling through slits and nicks. He's nearly shaking, but tries to hold himself together.

For Hitoshi.

"Babe," his voice comes as a whisper, as the blond lifts himself back to his knees, leaning against the bed. "Don't blame yourself, you did nothing wrong."

A shuddered exhale, that fans over Kaminari's shoulder, as the bigger man wraps his arms around his waist. Pulling Denki closer, Hitoshi buries his face in the crook of his neck.

Again, that dreadful silence, hanging in the air like elevated bombs. Draping his palm down to Hitoshi's neck, Denki succumbs to the uncomfortable itch of his knees from sitting on them, and climbs onto the other's lap. Their bare torsos press against each other, heat radiating in soothing waves, and Denki plants small kisses on the purple head's shoulder.


Suddenly, a crooked laugh clashes with Denki's skin, sending shivers down his spine. "Who would have thought I failed to eliminate a target, and instead of killing me they tried to send me to jail."

"Hey," the blond scoffs, pinching Hitoshi's arm. "I would kill her before she could breathe near you. You're not dying on *my* watch."

Shinsou blows air through his nose, and Kaminari squirms from the tickling sensation. "What would I have done without you..."

"Nah, don't question it when I'm literally sitting on your lap," the attempt to humor falls flat over the dank atmosphere, neither of them crack even the tiniest of smiles.

Hitoshi's chest rises and falls, heartbeat pounding against Denki's chest. Drifting his palm over his husband's defined hips, he reaches his back, nuzzling closer to him. His hold around Denki tightens as well, so much that the man can barely breathe. But he doesn't mind it, somehow, it reminds him that Hitoshi is here, that even though he's upset and Denki is ready to fight those assholes again and again - his lover is here, in his arms, and that's the most important part of it.



“I’m just-” Hitoshi’s voice cracks and he tilts his head, indigo hair softly dances under Denki’s chin. “I don’t understand, Den. Why- why would they do that?” The broken expression of his voice shatters Kaminari’s heart to pieces, and a knot forms in his stomach, pushing the sadness through his blood.

“Cause they’re jerks. Quirkphobic idiots that need to mind their own damn business, and kiss your feet for protecting their sorry ass.”

It’s quiet again, before Shinsou lets out a weak snort. “You sound like Bakugou.”

“What can I say? We all have an inner Bakubitch,” he shrugs, piercing their wall with burning, agitated, gold eyes. “You- you don’t even realize how fucking pissed I am. I can’t believe that they ignored the evidence and blamed everything on you. The moment I discover who’s actually behind it I’m-”

He’s so busy rambling that he doesn’t notice when Shinsou pulls back, re-adjusts their position, and only comes back to reality when a pair of lips catch his words; pushing them back into his mouth. He freezes for a moment, puzzled, but soon melts into Hitoshi’s arms, kissing him back.


“I can tell that you’re mad,” murmurs the purpled haired hero on his lips, while cold palms glide down, to hold Denki’s hips. “After being together for so long, I can perfectly sense when you’re one second away from pulling out someone’s teeth.”

A little grin curls up on his lips. “I’m ready to commit the most horrible crime, if it means I can protect you. Don’t test me on this one.”

“I would rather avoid committing crimes,” Shinsou admits through a laugh, tucking a few blond strands of hair behind Kaminari’s ear. “But, same.”

Denki sighs, cupping the sides of Hitoshi’s face. Even though his voice isn’t as trembling as before, the hurt is written all over his face. Behind the tough mask and lion-hearted man, sits the little boy who was called a villain his whole life, for something he didn’t ask for. Couldn’t control.

Doesn’t matter how much effort Hitoshi is going to put into pretending that he’s alright, Denki knows that his insecurities are boiling in his head. That his brain is miles away, imagining the worst outcomes and feeding him with lies. So he leans closer, kissing his nose, bringing their forehead together.



“Please, don’t let this affect you,” he whispers, drawing circles on Shinsou’s cheeks. A shaky breath crackles on his mouth, and the grip around him tightens again. “They’re assholes and they don’t deserve your attention. I know that you’re upset; you can see through my anger, but I can see through your pain-”

“That’s cheesy.”

“Shuddup,” he blows on Hitoshi’s lips and the purple head huffs. “What I’m trying to say is, fuck them. I love you, your friends love you, and people who deserve your attention will support you. Those quirkphobes can jump down a pit of shit, and your duty is to ignore them.”

A wobbly smile. “I’ll try.”

“I’m here for you, remember that, okay?” Drawing undefined shapes with his thumbs, he then slides his hands behind Shinsou’s scalp, planting a few more kisses on his cheeks where the red marks are still visible. “And it’s okay to be upset about it now, you’re tired. I’m going to take a day off tomorrow so we can cuddle and watch terrible movies the whole day, how does that sound?”

“My taste in movies isn’t terrible,” argues Hitoshi. Before Denki can tease him more, the larger man throws himself back, and they crash on the bed - a mess of limbs tangled with the blanket.

Denki swallows a yelp, but can’t stop the giggle when Hitoshi rolls over and pushes his nose into his chest. “It tickles,” not that his husband cares. Hooking a leg over Shinsou’s hip, he feels his hand grabbing Kaminari’s thighs, and a hot breath runs down his chest.

“Thanks,” whispers the larger man, nuzzling as close as he can.

“Nothing to thank me for,” Denki loops his arms around Hitoshi, as if trying to hide this tank of a man inside of him. The reply is a gentle squeeze to his thigh, and if Denki squints hard enough, he can spot a ghost of a smile.

Even though they stink, bodies covered in dry layers of sweat and dirt; it seems so trivial, unimportant. How can it be? Nothing is more significant for Denki than the man holding him in his arms, the knowledge that he’s safe, unharmed.

“Hey, Toshi,” he whispers, waiting for a hum in response. “I love you.”

A kiss is pressed to his chest, and a low growl vibrates on his skin. “Not as much as I love *you*.”



PASSED NOTES

SYNNIE

Tags: canon universe, sickening amounts of fluff, obvious crush, Bakusquad are best wingmen, written notes, confession

“GO GO GO!!” Eijiro Kirishima’s boisterous voice rang out through the halls of U.A. It was the most prestigious school, filled with students from around the world who would prove themselves worthy of the title Hero. The pinnacles of society. It was filled with some of the bravest people on the planet.

People that were running through the halls like animals, their laughter a cacophony of variously pitched cackles. Knowing they were so close to being late for their first afternoon class made them giddy with adrenaline. Tape stuck to the doorframe and four teens slingshotted into the classroom, falling over each other and laughing harder.

Kirishima landed on the bottom and on top of him thudded Denki Kaminari, followed by Mina Ashido, and lastly Hanta Sero, whose tape kept them from skidding further down the hall in their attempt to make it to class.

“Get out of the doorway and into your seats before you all get detention,” a deep voice sounded from behind them.

There was a mad scramble to get to their feet as their teacher, Mr. Aizawa, stepped into the room behind them. Kaminari was sure his heart could be heard across the room as he stood up and ran to his desk. He slid into his chair so fast that it tipped onto its back legs and would have fallen had Kirishima not been there to stop it.

“Thanks, bro,” Kaminari whispered.

“You got it, bro,” Kirishima whispered back.

For a few moments, class seemed to settle. Until Sero gave a little snort and tried to hide his laughter. He had felt paper under his shoe as he sat at his desk, so he had grabbed it and read it. Then nudged Kirishima and handed it to him.

Kirishima’s eyes widened as he read it and looked over at Sero to confirm that he’d read the same thing. Sero’s shit eating grin confirmed it and Kirishima poked Kaminari’s back to get his attention before subtly slipping the paper forward. They were trying so hard to look like they were paying attention but their actions were gaining the attention of the rest of the class.



At least Mr. Aizawa seemed to not be paying attention, as close to sleep as he was.

Kaminari took the paper, curiosity gnawing at him. He unfolded it and found words written in the Latin alphabet. It was a requirement, as they did have to learn English. But it seemed someone was practicing writing something outside the curriculum. Something involving Kaminari.

His face went a thousand shades of red and he turned back to his friends who both sat there looking so pleased with themselves.

“This isn’t funny,” he hissed at them.

“Bro, we didn’t write it. Sero found it.”

The boy in question leaned closer and nodded. “I found it under my desk. It must’ve fallen out of his bag. Thought you’d want to see it.”

Kaminari looked at his paper, then his friends again. “Do you think he...?”

“He has class in here before lunch,” Kirishima pointed out.

“How do you even know that?”

“T sits at my desk. He’s worked with your man on a project.”

If Kaminari could get redder, he would have. “He’s not my-” He turned back around and ignored the chuckles from his so-called friends. He opened the paper again and had to bite his lip from smiling. Did he really write this?

A flash of pink and the paper was gone. Ashido had stolen it and looked over at them. She looked close to melting and cooing, but was clearly doing her best to refrain. She handed the paper back to Kaminari, though she wasn’t as subtle as the boys were.

A shadow fell over Kaminari. “If you think passing notes is more important than paying attention in my class, you can hand it over and I’ll read it out in front of the class.” Aizawa’s hand was extended and Kaminari was powerless to do anything other than hand it over.

Aizawa read it over to himself but didn’t broadcast it as he said he would. His only words were, “did you write this?”



“No sir. Sero found it. He gave it to me.”

“I see.” Aizawa turned and was about to walk to the front of the class but paused when Kaminari said his name.

“Mr Aizawa? Please sir, can I have that back?”

“Why?”

“I just... I just want it.”

Aizawa must have seen that Kaminari wanted it for his own reasons. It wasn't like Kaminari had any intention of making fun of the creator. He liked it. Aizawa folded the note and set it on Kaminari's desk. “Any more disruptions and you get detention.”

Kaminari unfolded the scrap of paper and read it over again.

*~~Hitoshi Kaminari~~
Denki Shinsou*

His name mixed with the name of the guy he had been crushing on the entire school year. Hitoshi Shinsou. Maybe it was someone's form of a joke. Kaminari knew he wasn't exactly subtle about liking him. Shinsou never seemed to notice, so Kaminari figured maybe the guy was straight. Or he just wasn't his type


But this little find - if it was in fact written by Shinsou - well, it changed everything.

“Sero,” he hissed, reaching his hand out behind him. “Tape me.”

With a chuckle, Sero ripped off a piece of his tape, compliments of his quirk. One piece. Two pieces. Little piece after little piece until not only was the paper attached to the inside of his binder, but he'd used the rest to create a giant heart around it.

Kaminari promptly closed his binder so no one else could see the note, despite everyone in the class having already heard everything.

.....



Luckily, Kaminari didn't need names on paper in a tape heart to embarrass himself where Shinsou was concerned. Normally he was really good at tripping over his own feet and making jokes about falling for him while doing finger guns, or taking a drink out of the fountain then hearing Shinsou's voice and choking on the aforementioned water.

Maybe seeing his and Shinsou's names together bolstered his confidence, and encouraged him to go out of his way to find him just to say hi. Even if it was a bit too loud as he ran across the field in hero training. Which led to Shinsou whipping his head around to look at Kaminari, that in turn made him miss an attack from Yaoyorozu that clipped him in the face the moment he turned back around.

By the end of the week, both Kaminari and Shinsou had a couple of extra bruises due to Kaminari's mishaps.

"Earth to Thunder Dolt!" Bakugo snapped as Sero grabbed Kaminari's fork to keep him from accidentally stabbing himself in the face.

"Oh leave him alone." At least Mina was supportive. "He's staring at his dream-boy over there."

Everyone's head turned to where Shinsou and a guy they didn't know from his class were walking down a cafeteria row. He must have had a sneaking suspicion that someone was watching him because the overtired teen looked over and saw five sets of eyes on him. He looked uncomfortable, clearly knowing he'd been the topic of conversation.

"Don't make it weird for him," Mina nudged Kaminari's shoulder. "Go say hi."

Saying hi was a good start. She had a love life - a two month strong relationship - so she knew all about catching the eye of someone special.

"Hey Shinsou!" Kaminari shouted from where he sat. The boy immediately looked in Kaminari's direction. The more observant types like Bakugo may have noticed him perk up, standing a little straighter under Kaminari's attention. Not that that detail would ever get shared because Bakugo didn't care enough to mention it.

Rather than catch up to him and talk with him like Mina had no doubt meant, Kaminari did the next best thing in his opinion. He stood up and gave a frantic flail of a wave. "HI!"

Shinsou lifted his hand in greeting then immediately ducked his head and walked away. Kaminari sat down, too mortified at his own actions to notice that Shinsou was blushing.

"I'm an idiot," he groaned as he laid his forehead against the table.

“Maybe you’re in luck and ‘idiot’ is his type.”

“Wow, how supportive of you, Bakugo,” Sero said dryly before turning to Kaminari. “He’s right though - some people like dumbasses. Which is great because otherwise I’d be screwed.” He gave a little laugh and clapped a hand to his shoulder comfortingly. “It’s gonna be fine, dude.”

“Hey!” Kirishima shouted even louder than Kaminari had been, and it captured the attention of every student around. He ducked in time to avoid Bakugo’s slap upside the head. “I know, I know. Volume.” He rolled his eyes good naturedly before nudging Kaminari. “Invite him to the study sesh.”

"I didn't agree to this," Bakugo pointed out, but Kaminari noticed it was more of a grumble rather than a no holds barred telling off. If he was fluent in Bakugo - and he was getting there - he would say that maybe Bakugo even supported his attempt at obtaining a love life of his own.



Which was how Shinsou found himself on his way to a study room in the library that Saturday with Kaminari's friends, though no Kaminari. Who may have been delayed due to overthinking his outfit choices and freaking out over the fact he was going to study with the man of his dreams. Who was, without doubt, going to see that studying was not one of Kaminari's finer abilities.

“You’re sure this is fine?” Shinsou asked Kirishima quietly as they waited outside the library with Bakugo glaring at him with his face contorted like a rabid gremlin.

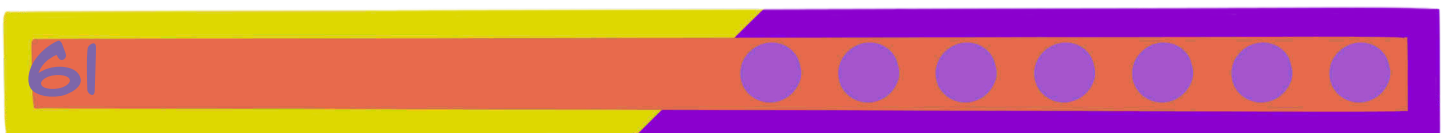
“Yeah, dude!” Kirishima clapped his shoulder. “Just ignore his face.”

“Yeah, he can’t help that it’s always that ugly,” Sero grinned cheekily.

“I’ll kill you, Soy Sa-” but his threat was cut off by Mina and Kaminari arriving.

“You better not kill him. I need him.”

“Aww thanks baby,” Sero beamed as Mina came to his defense.





“Just until I manage walking on stilts. Right now I still need him to reach the top shelf.”

Sero clutched his heart as he stumbled back a little. “Ouch.”

During their exchange, Kaminari did his best to casually wander over to stand next to Shinsou.

“I like your shirt,” Shinsou told him as he rubbed the back of his neck shyly.

Kaminari looked down. “Oh this old thing? Thanks.” He was in no way going to tell him that he wore the shirt that said I’m a cat just for him, though to everyone else it was so obvious it didn’t need to be said. After all, saying he was a cat might cause Shinsou to like him more. Or take him home. Both were solid options to Kaminari.

But despite it being on Kaminari’s mind, studying seemed to be on everyone else’s so he followed the others into the library, up the stairs and into the room Bakugo reserved every Saturday.

He beamed at Shinsou as the taller boy held the door so he could walk in first. Was he being a gentleman? Was he trying to get a peek at Kaminari’s butt in his snug jeans as he walked toward the desk because he missed the opportunity going up the stairs by walking beside Kaminari? Which was something Kaminari was super giddy about but at the same time, he did wear those jeans specifically for Shinsou.

Still, he got the best seat in the house, which in his opinion, was the one next to his crush, even though that was the whole point in having him with them in the first place.

Kaminari had been nervous about his terrible study skills being outed in front of the guy he liked, but he didn’t have to worry about that because he didn’t get a lot of studying done. Of course, any time he envisioned a study date where not a lot of studying got done, there were less people involved, and a lot more kissing.

But it was a study session with a group, not a study date with Shinsou. The only clothing that had been taken off were jackets. The others were actually beginning to study, even though Kaminari sat there staring at his textbook and trying not to be obvious that he was trying to spend his time sneaking looks at the cutie next to him.

Subtlety was never Kaminari’s strongest suit.

“Oh for the love of fuck,” Bakugo groaned. He reached across the table and opened the front of Kaminari’s binder. Out in the open for all to see was the piece of paper taped to the inside



cover.

“Bakugo! What the hell?!” Kaminari floundered and frantically tried to close it, but it was too late. Shinsou had seen everything.

“I’m sick of this!” Bakugo yelled.

Despite his voice being so soft it was barely above a whisper, Shinsou seemed to be louder than Bakugo. “Where did you get that?”

“Soy Sauce found it. Look, Duncelace has liked you for months. Kiss him and make him just shut up about you so we can just fucking study!”

Shinsou looked over at Kaminari before both of their faces went red and they immediately turned their eyes to textbooks that weren’t even open yet.

“Get out. You two are disgusting,” Bakugo rolled his eyes and grabbed the pencil from Kirishima seconds before he started to chew on it.

Sero glanced cheekily around the table. “You’re just mad because you haven’t been asked out by-”

“Finish that sentence and I’ll rip off your arm and beat you with your weird ass elbow!”

The usual banter immediately began with Bakugo trying to come up with creative threats while Sero responded with various quips of how Bakugo wasn’t smart or capable enough to get away with it. Normally Kaminari paid attention. Normally he joined in on the instigating.


But he didn’t normally have Shinsou sitting so close that their legs were almost touching. And that was much more interesting than the usual mischief. He looked up from the textbook he wasn’t actually reading and found Shinsou already looking at him. He gave him a shy smile.

“Is it true?” Shinsou whispered.

“Is what true?”

“That you like me? That you don’t have that in your book just to humiliate me?”

A lot of words could be used to describe Kaminari, and practical joker was one of them. But his golden eyes were earnest as he looked up into Shinsou’s tired ones. “I wouldn’t humiliate



you. Well, not intentionally. I probably did all week. And the week before that and the month before that. But I embarrassed myself in the process. I do like you Shinsou. A lot, actually.”

“I like you too. Whether you really are a cat or a human.”

The reference to his shirt may have been a little on the lame side, but Kaminari lit up. Shinsou liked him back. He really liked him. Not just tolerated him because he had to, and despite the fact that he was loud and probably annoying.

He actually liked him back.

Unable to resist any longer, Kaminari reached under the table and brushed his hand against Shinsou’s. Had Bakugo not been yelling and subsequently getting hushed, the electric shock from their hands touching would have been loud enough that it could’ve been heard. Both boys jerked their hands back, but after a moment they found their way back.

This time Shinsou was the one to reach out. He nudged Kaminari’s pinky with his own, staring blankly at his book as the Bakugo-led chaos unfolded around them. Their pinkies linked under the table and they sat there quietly, happily.

That quiet happiness was short-lived when Kirishima yelled for them to run. Kaminari’s head shot up to see Kirishima’s arms around Bakugo’s waist as the blond thrashed frantically, trying to get free.

Sero was long gone. The only sign of him was Ashido flying behind him like a kite as he held her hand while running down the hallway, both of them cackling.

Kaminari grinned at Shinsou and yanked him up from his seat. Sero and Ashido went left, so they went right. Whoever got caught first would be dead, despite the fact that for once, Kaminari hadn’t been participating. They ran as fast as they could out of the library, across the field and behind the gym equipment shed.

Kaminari leaned back against the building to catch his breath. At least Shinsou was just as out of breath. Though he didn’t need to look so attractive as he stood there, flushed and panting with one hand against the wall. Why couldn’t he be the one tomato-faced and wheezing, instead of Kaminari?

They looked at each other and immediately burst out laughing. They were supposed to be studying and then they were tearing off like they’d actually done something that would warrant a Bakugo death. It was insane, but it felt right. It was also a good initiation if Shinsou was



going to be around a lot more. After all, these kinds of things were regular occurrences.

“So,” Shinsou said after they finally calmed down. “I guess I had nothing to worry about.”

“Worry about? What would you be worried about?” Kaminari tilted his head, adorable confusion written all over his face.

“For the whole name thing. I thought you might’ve been mad if you saw it. Or that it would weird you out.”

“No!” Kaminari shook his head. “I’m not mad or weirded out! I... I liked it, actually. A lot. I didn’t even think you noticed I was alive before that. Aside from the times I was yelling your name. Like you noticed me because you responded, obviously. But I mean attracted to me kind of notice me. They’re different, you know?”

“I flirted with you in the hall a few times,” Shinsou admitted, trying to save Kaminari from his own ramblings.

It worked. Kaminari immediately fell silent as he racked his brain until it hurt trying to think of a time when Shinsou actually flirted with him. Finally he gave up. “When?”

“When I said hi.”

“But that’s all you ever said! Just hi. You never even made eye contact.”

“Yeah.”


“Oh.” It made more sense now. Not that Kaminari could say his flirting was much better. Sure he flirted with everyone, but someone he actually liked? It never went smoothly; as the past week had proven. Shinsou tried to pull his hand away but Kaminari tightened his grip. “Date me.”

“What?”

“We just admitted we like each other. So dating me comes next. I mean, unless you don’t want to. But you must want to if you’re figuring out whose name looks best.”

Shinsou reached up with his free hand to rub the back of his neck shyly. “I mean...”

“So date me. We can’t get married if we don’t date first. Those are the rules. I don’t make them,



I just follow them. So... what do you say?"

"I'm going to have to say yes," Shinsou gave him a rare smile. "But only because it's the rules, and all that."

"I've never been so happy to have rules." Kaminari tried to say with a straight face, but looked a little sick at the fact those words came out of his mouth. "Don't tell Iida I said that. I feel like I need to wash my mouth out with soap. How could you let me swear like that? You're leading me down a slippery slope, sir."

"That's what I do. And since you're all about rules these days, there's one more we should probably follow."

"There is?" Kaminari's head tilted in the other direction.

Shinsou nodded and did his best to look casual as he glanced around them. He looked back at Kaminari and dropped his voice to a conspiratorial whisper. "If we have to date before we get married, we should probably kiss before that too."

"Kiss?" A squeak left the smaller man as he looked up into purple eyes. "You want to kiss me?"

"It's a rule. I don't make them, I just follow them."

Kaminari's face split into a wide smile hearing his words said back to him. He leaned up towards him and butterflies fluttered around in his stomach as Shinsou's face got closer to his until they were barely an inch apart.

"Only because of the rules," he managed to whisper before Shinsou's lips met his. His lips were as soft as he had daydreamed about, even if he did taste a bit like coffee. But just as Kaminari was starting to lean into it, Shinsou pulled back.

He put some distance between them, never letting go of Kaminari's hand. One kiss wasn't really enough for Kaminari - he wanted many, many more - but he was content to follow Shinsou down the street. He couldn't keep the stupid smile off of his face as they walked hand in hand.

Faintly, they could still hear Bakugo yelling. They'd get their bags from Kirishima the next day. For right now they just wanted to get the boyfriend's dating rules thing down. And maybe work on the kissing one a little bit more.





ALWAYS GOING TO YOU SCREAM

Tags: angst with a happy ending

Kaminari was walking in circles at a fast pace across his messy room, hands running through his blond hair in a sign of desperation and anxiety. He watched expectantly at Ashido, who was digging into his closet looking for the perfect outfit for today's occasion, all the while Sero observed with clear amusement at the panicked expression on Kaminari's face from his comfortable spot on the bed.

"Denki, babe, stop that. I can hear your brain overthinking this too much, you're going to burn your last brain cell," the pink haired girl said, and even though she didn't look away from the clothes in front of her, the roll of her eyes was evident. That earned a laugh from the raven haired boy.

"I'm not overthinking, Mina! I'm deadass panicking because you're taking forever! What if I'm late and he already left?!" He threw himself on the bed next to Sero with a frustrated groan.

Sero patted his shoulder in a vague attempt of comfort, "If Shinsou wants to date you, he must know that you are always going to be late to everything, dude"

Kaminari took a second to think about that, then, he chuckled, "Well, yeah! But I should at least, try not to be thirty minutes late on our first date, right?" He looked at Sero for agreement, only to find a half smile. The blond turned to Ashido and added, "Please Mina, I'm begging you"

Ashido ignored his complaints, tired-though amused- of having heard them during the last hour. Finally, she took a shirt out of the closet, the last piece she needed to complete the rest of the outfit she had planned.

"You said you're meeting at the park, right?" She hummed when Kaminari made a muffled noise in agreement from where his head was buried in between his hands, "Well then, this should be perfect"

She handed Kaminari everything she pulled together. A white t-shirt with a bright yellow lighting bolt design, skinny deep blue jeans, one of his usual white snickers, a denim jacket



the same shade of his pants and a black choker.

Without another word, Kaminari snagged the set of clothing out of Ashido's hands and ran to his dorm's bathroom, the shirt of his pajamas already thrown to the floor the moment he entered and locked the door.

It didn't take longer than a couple of minutes for Kaminari to change into his new outfit, but it definitely took way longer than that to take out his blue eyeliner from where he kept it in his bathroom's cabinet and applied it, being extra careful to avoid fucking it up– not being completely successful though, since in his rush, Kaminari poked his eye with the eyeliner pen.

When he was done with the makeup part, Kaminari finally felt ready to go, he allowed himself to look at his reflection in the mirror for a few seconds. He was glad that, during the time Ashido was looking through his wardrobe, Denki used his hair straightener, styling it in a way he knew Shinsou liked– because the purple haired boy had already told him that much one day when both of them were in the campus library–, he didn't know how much time he saved, but even thinking about it was giving him a massive headache.

Still glancing at the mirror, Kaminari thought that he'd have to thank Ashido the moment he stepped out of the bathroom, even though she took almost fifty minutes to pick his clothing, they were perfect. With a last look at himself, Kaminari gave his reflection a wink as a boost of confidence, appreciating his work with the eyeliner and the way his clothes fit his body perfectly. With a smile, he exited the bathroom.

The first thing he heard were the high pitched noises of excitement from Ashido and the clapping and squeals from Sero. It made heat rise to his face, tinting his cheeks a soft color pink that had already started to expand to his ears.

The two pairs of eyes never left him, not even as he put on a show and did a twirl, showing off his outfit.

"Damn, Denki, you're looking smoking *hot*," Ashido said, still looking at him from head to toes, smirking at him as she stood up from where she was comfortably in between Sero's arms. "I'm waiting for a thank you gift for being a fashion goddess."

Kaminari rolled his eyes in fake annoyance, before bursting into chuckles– he was going to have a date with his long time crush and he felt hot with how he looked, he deserved feeling happy and laughed with his friends–. "Thank you, Mina" The blond said, with a sincere smile.

"If Shinsou doesn't kiss the hell out of you today, I'm calling dibs," Sero added, and Ashido



hummed in agreement, both of them laughing when the blush on Kaminari's face deepened.

"For real though. If Shinsou doesn't fall for you even more after this, he's either blind or the biggest idiot on campus."

Kaminari let out an awkward laugh at the comment, feeling even more anxious with the passing of seconds. "That, somehow, managed to make me more nervous. What if he doesn't like me?"

"Denks, babe, I have seen the way that boy looks at you," She said, her voice not holding a single drop of irony or doubt; that, paired with the comforting touch of her hand on his shoulder, never failed to make Kaminari feel better. "Trust me, he likes you, a lot."

He took a deep breath before smiling widely and triumphantly, his confidence being regained. "Okay, let's do this!"




Walking towards the park where he and Shinsou agreed to meet for their date– that was nearby a food festival Denki wanted to surprise the other guy with, which in his opinion, made a very good place for a first date– gave him more than enough time to think. Denki let his mind go over and over all the thoughts he had about Hitoshi.

He first met Shinsou because of a friend in common, Bakugou. Both Shinsou and Bakugou shared one of their physics classes in college and Katsuki might not have admitted it, but the insomniac man was one of the few people he tolerated and considered himself friends with, besides the others in the Bakusquad. The moment Kaminari saw Shinsou bursting into Bakugou's room, where all the squad was casually having a sleepover, because the purple haired guy needed one of the notes Katsuki had for their class, all he could think was on how goddamn cute Shinsou was.

Denki got his number just one week later.

After that, the two of them talked for hours on the phone, either texting or calling each other, and they went for coffee or some sweet treats every once in a while before or in between classes. Damn, Denki even flirted with Hitoshi a couple of times and according to the other's reactions, Kaminari could have sworn that he liked him back.



The moment Kaminari asked Shinsou on a date, saying that the blond was surprised and nervous by how easily and fast Hitoshi accepted was an understatement.

The knot that had formed on his throat the moment the question left his mouth, died when he saw the soft pink blush on Shinsou's cheeks that was already expanding to his neck and ears, matching with that small and timid but confident smile. In that second, Shinsou nodded and said, "It's a date then Kaminari." A warm feeling expanded through the blond's chest, who eagerly texted Shinsou the details of their future date, the place where they would meet, time and date, just some hours later.

As he walked on the sidewalk, Kaminari felt his heart beating fast against his chest just from his thoughts, he was almost sure that the random strangers walking next to him would be able to hear it if they paid close attention.


Why was he so nervous in the first place? Kaminari didn't really understand that either, he'd had dates in the past, and he'd had two serious relationships too. He wouldn't call himself a love master like Ashido, but he had plenty of experience. That was why Denki didn't understand why he was so nervous about this specific date, why the mere thought of Shinsou Hitoshi made him both terrified and excited, why just thinking about the purple haired guy made him tremble with anticipation.

But Kaminari liked the feeling he had when he was beside Shinsou and was dying to see where this date would take them.

Kaminari got out of his thoughts when he saw the familiarity of the place where he agreed to meet with Shinsou. He pulled his phone out of his jacket's pocket to check the hour; it was only ten to five, giving him exactly ten minutes more before Hitoshi would come. Denki chuckled to himself, this was the first time he had ever arrived this early somewhere.

To kill the time he had left, he scrolled through all the texts that he hadn't read from the Bakusquad group chat; it was either messages that gave Kaminari their support or dumb memes. Turning on his phone's camera, Denki snapped a picture of himself with a humorous expression and a peace sign and sent it to his friends.

By the time the blond checked the time again, it was already 17:16– Denki made a shocked gasp at that, he hadn't expected it to be that late already, time had flown as he waited for his date apparently–. It was now more than fifteen minutes since Shinsou was supposed to arrive, but he decided to not give it that much thought. Instead, Denki started to walk towards the park's entrance; maybe Shinsou didn't know where he was or where to find him. Yeah, that was it.



As he walked towards the metal gate with the name of the park on it, Kaminari eyed the cotton candy stands, instantly, deciding that it was going to be the first thing he was going to treat Shinsou to.

.....

17:43

More than forty minutes had passed without hearing or knowing anything about the purple haired man, Denki's anxiety was rising with every minute.

It was already too late, too far from the original hour and Kaminari was holding onto the hope of the memory of Shinsou, who looked as excited and pumped about this date as Denki himself was.

It wasn't possible that Shinsou had second thoughts, right? Or that he lied, straight to Kaminari's face about wanting this as much as he did. Shinsou wasn't one to fool or play cheap tricks on anyone, Kaminari knew that, he knew that it made Shinsou feel like a bad person, like a criminal. But Denki didn't know what else to believe, or what the purple haired boy expected him to believe, the moment he didn't show up or answer his calls during the last hour. Was he supposed to not think that he just got stood up on their first date?

Was it possible that Kaminari misunderstood all of Shinsou's actions? Before this day, the blond thought firmly that everything that Shinsou did and said, meant that he liked Denki as much as he did— everytime they messed around together, the jokes, the constant flirting and late night getaways they did when one of them couldn't sleep, staying up until the next morning watching Netflix while cuddling on the couch of Shinsou's dorm room. Denki really thought they all meant something for Shinsou. But it seemed like Kaminari had gotten it all wrong and maybe he didn't know him as well as he thought.

Kaminari's mind was already full of negative thoughts and as much he wanted them to shut them up, it only resulted in them getting louder, tears gathered in the corner of his eyes, clouding his vision and forming a strong knot in his throat that made it difficult for him to breathe properly.

Kaminari didn't think twice before doing what he would normally do when he was at the edge of tears and needed someone by his side; Denki grabbed his phone from his jacket and sat down on a bench nearby.



The phone rang four times and Kaminari had started wondering if the other man would be asleep in the middle of the afternoon when Sero's voice resounded through his ear.

"Hey, Kami! How is your date going?" Sero said, but his voice was overshadowed by the background noise of other voices and music.

"Are you talking to Denki?" The bubbly voice of Ashido could be heard, although it felt a little distanced. Denki heard some shuffling on the other side of the line before Ashido talked again, this time feeling a lot closer than the first time "Why are you on your phone if you are on a date? Don't leave Shinsou alone and go back to him!"

"Am I on speaker?" He asked, praying to all gods that the others wouldn't notice the way his voice trembled, Denki dug his fingernails into the soft skin of the palm of the hand that was holding his phone in a vague and failed attempt of holding back his tears. He continued trying to avoid as much as he could the comment about Shinsou, "Where are you?"


"Yeah, dude! We are at Baku's apartment," Sero answered as both him and Ashido laughed at his confusion— plus, he also heard another sweet and loud laugh he recognized as Kirishima's. Letting their laughs die out, Denki had to pull the phone away from his ear as Sero yelled loud and clear, "If you and Shinsou aren't too busy making out, you two should come to our video game tournament! We are going to stay here all night long, baby!"

A growl in the background interrupted the next thing Sero was about to say, "Stop inviting more fucking extras into my goddamn apartment, fucker!", Bakugou's voice added, putting emphasis on his phrase.

Denki could perfectly imagine the way Sero would roll his eyes playfully at Bakugou's answer, "We are going to ignore that." If Kaminari wasn't too absorbed in his own mind, he would have laughed at the angry snort Bakugou made, "I think Shinsou wouldn't mind it if he can still make out with you on the couch. Besides, Mina has been insisting on giving your man the shovel talk."

At that, the whole squad started to express their agreement, four different voices talking and making noises at the same time, making it tough to interpret half of what was being said. Kaminari didn't talk at all, everything about their conversation on Shinsou only helped in making the pressure in his chest bigger and heavier. Physically unable to hold his emotions back, Denki let out a sob, not quiet enough to go unnoticed by his friends.

The laughter ceased immediately, leaving a heavy and tense silence on both ends of the call, only being filled by the small sobs Kaminari couldn't contain.



There was some movement on the other line before Kirishima's soft and soothing voice spoke directly into the phone, he probably took the phone away from Sero to talk to him, "Kami, bro, what's wrong?"

He couldn't answer though, since the rest of the squad couldn't hold back their worry and started to bombard him with questions; Ashido asked where Shinsou was and Sero asked if anyone was hurt or if Denki needed them to call to an ambulance or if they should go directly to the park with him and picked them up.

The questions only served as fuel for Kaminari's tears, making his sobs get louder and the tears never stopped falling. How was he even supposed to talk about this? How was he supposed to explain that the guy he had been gushing about for the last few months never came to meet him for a goddamn date? That even when he tried so hard to text and call Shinsou during his waiting, Denki ended up with a bunch of unread texts and unanswered calls?

Kaminari put the phone down on the bench he was sitting on, not really paying attention anymore to the call, then he put his hands on his eyes, pressing with too much strength until his vision was being filled with white dots, trying unsuccessfully to make the tears stop.

When Denki realized the loud voices stopped, probably because of the awful and loud cries, he picked up the phone again, holding it close to his ear until his knuckles turned white. He could hear some murmuring in the background, although he didn't catch what the others were talking about, it didn't take much to know they were arguing about him, about Shinsou and about what the hell was happening on Denki's end of the line.

Denki took a deep breath, saying what the others were waiting for, an explanation, "S-Shinsou isn't here, he never came", it was a simple statement but it took a lot for Kaminari to actually say it, to not show the others how much it hurt.

"What?" Sero said plainly, honestly, it was kind of scary to Denki how emotionless he sounded, "He stood you up?"

"I fucking knew he was an asshole! Fucking eyebags better not show his goddamn face again or I'm gonna rip his head off", Bakugou growled while everyone else voiced their agreement.

"I'm going to kick his ass", Mina agreed.

"It's okay," Kaminari said, although it wasn't, "It was foolish of me to assume he liked me in that way. I'm an idiot for thinking he didn't just accept the date because I insisted a little too much." Another sob interrupted him, "I'm just gonna go back to my dorm room" *And cry*



my fucking heart out because of Shinsou and my own stupidity.

As he was standing up from the bench and started walking in direction of the college campus, he distinguished the sound of keys shuffling and people moving on the other line, “We are not that far from the campus, we should be there in-” Ashido paused, probably checking the time on her phone, “about twenty minutes”

Kaminari shook his head, forgetting that the others couldn’t see him, “No, no, no, you don’t have to come here, guys, it’s not that much of a deal!”

“Bullshit”, Bakugou deadpanned, “We are fucking going, like it or not. You better leave the door open if you don’t want me to break it down, Dunce Face.”

And with that, they hung up without letting Denki protest their suggestion, they were all too stubborn to accept no for an answer, and if the blond was being completely honest, being with his friends might be what he needed after his failure of a date.


Kaminari arrived at his dorm room fifteen minutes later. Usually, it didn’t take him more than half that time, but not today, not when he walked dragging his feet slowly, eyes fixated on the floor as his view got blurry with tears once again. Denki was taking his denim jacket and shoes off when a loud banging at his door startled him.

As soon as the door cracked open, Sero, Ashido, Kirishima and Bakugou barged inside, instantly, putting the pizza they brought with them on the floor, crushing Denki’s body with hugs. They all let Kaminari cry and whine about how Shinsou probably lied about wanting to date him and how much the blond wished he would have shown up.



Next morning, Kaminari woke up at noon curled up on his bed, hugging the blankets tightly and feeling like absolute shit, his head hurt and his eyes were red and swollen, which he blamed on his crying the night before. He shifted on his bed, groaning as his headache got worse with the movement.

As he blinked a couple of times for his eyes to get used to the light entering through his open window, Denki started to remember vaguely the events that happened after his friends arrived at his dorm– there was a lot of crying and hugs involved, he was sure of it–, but the blond could also remember his friends leaving early in the morning, Ashido murmuring something about work, breakfast and a promise of them all coming back later today to hang out.



What Kaminari noticed next, was a migraine pill and a bottle of water on his nightstand, with a note on by its side that read “We left some pancakes on your desk! See u later Denks!”. The blond couldn’t help the smile that took over his face as he swallowed the pill and walked towards his desk, where a take-out box from a cafeteria nearby the college campus was found, three fluffy pancakes with syrup inside of it.

Denki picked up his phone, which had somehow ended up under his bed, while he shoved a piece of a pancake into his mouth. He decided to write a thank you message to the Bakusquad group chat, only for him to encounter several missed calls and unread texts from the same person, Shinsou.

Just with that, Kaminari felt like crying already, the knot on his chest coming back full force. Was Shinsou for real? He couldn’t do that to Denki! He couldn’t stand him up on their first date and then text him like nothing happened. Kaminari sighed heavily as he opened the texts.

[5:53] Kaminari, Im so sorry.

[5:54] I swear I wanted to go to our date

[6:14] Please, Kami, answer my calls.

[6:36] I know you’re mad at me and I don’t blame you, I would be mad if I was in your place.

[6:37] But I have a reason.

[6:37] Just let me explain and I can make up to you.

[8:42] If you still want me after this, I want to take you on another date.

[8:43] I mean, on another first date. Since I fucked his one up.

[9:36] Fuck, Im so sorry I fucked it up.

[11:23] Just call me back.

[11:24] Please

Kaminari frowned at his phone, staring down at the number of texts he received from the other man.

It was unfair and stupid how hopeful the messages made him, about his future relationship with Shinsou, when there wasn’t a real guarantee that what the insomniac man was going to give him wouldn’t be just a mere excuse. Although Kaminari’s pessimistic thoughts were clouding his mind– the belief that Shinsou didn’t want him was too loud in his brain–, Denki still believed in Shinsou. He believed that Shinsou was way better than what happened yesterday and now that the purple haired man had already made the first step to *try* to explain his version of the story, Kaminari could try to listen to him. If he wasn’t satisfied with Shinsou’s



explanation, he could end the conversation with the other man.

It was a great plan. With that thought in mind, Kaminari dialed Shinsou's number and called him back.

Shinsou answered after the second tone.

"Kaminari," Shinsou said, and Denki could practically hear the relief mixed with regret in his voice. "Thank you for calling back, I was beginning to think that you were going to igno-

"You said you were going to explain, right?" Denki cut Shinsou with his own voice, although it felt kinda cruel when the blond heard the sharp inhale on the other line, but Kaminari was strong and he still deserved an explanation.

Shinsou coughed awkwardly, "Yeah, right, sure, I do have to give you an explanation," he chuckled softly into the phone to ease the atmosphere, but only received back a pause filled with silence that seemed to go on forever. "I'm sorry, Denki. I was really expecting our date and-" Hitoshi growled in what Denki recognized as frustration, "Eri and I got in a car crash, it wasn't anything serious, really, but dad and papa made us stay in the hospital for check ups"

"HOSPITAL? Car crash?!", Kaminari yelled, his eyes open wide as he ran his hand through blond hair, previous sadness, anger and disappointment quickly forgotten only to be replaced with an intense feeling of worry "Holy shit, Shinsou, are you okay?" He shook his head at the thought, "Stupid question, of course you're not okay, you are at a hospital! Which hospital? The one near the campus?"

"Y-yeah?" Shinsou answered, confused and speechless.

Kaminari could hear clearly the confusion on the man's voice, probably not expecting their conversation to go the way it did- and if he was being honest, it wasn't how Denki thought it would go when he dialed Hitoshi's number either, but he couldn't care less as he hung up the call without waiting for another word. As he was sending a quick text to the Bakusquad that he wasn't going to be in his dorm for the next hours, Denki started dressing up in something other than an oversized t-shirt and lighting bolt underwear. His mind was full of scary images of Shinsou and his younger sister in a car accident. He exited the dorm as fast as he could before directing himself towards the hospital.

He just needed to talk to Hitoshi.



“What do you mean by no?” Denki asked, his frown getting more and more prominent on his face with every word the secretary at the front desk of the hospital said.

The older woman did nothing more than raise her eyebrows in annoyance because of the very persistent college student standing in front of her. “What I just said, kid”, she answered, not even looking back at him anymore, her blue eyes fixated on the paperwork laying on the desk, giving him a not-so-gentle dismissive gesture with her hands. “Only family allowed, visiting hours don’t start anytime soon, come back until they do”, the woman recited like it was a spell.

Kaminari groaned, dropping his head in between his hands in frustration as he started walking away from her. The blond man had arrived at the hospital only five minutes after he ended his call with Hitoshi, feeling his phone vibrating every few minutes with a new incoming text, not minding them as he walked at a quick pace towards the emergency entrance to ask for the room’s number for the patient Shinsou Hitoshi, only to obtain a rude answer from the secretary at the front desk.

That was how Denki planned on sneaking into Hitoshi’s room without anyone noticing.


Look, he wouldn’t have snuck inside if the older woman at the front desk would have just told him the number of Shinsou’s room; that was how he ended up sending a text asking where he was, grinning at his phone when Hitoshi answered a minute later.

If you had told Denki last night that today he would be sneaking inside a hospital just to get to the room where Hitoshi was, he would have laughed and said something along the lines of “Sure I will.” The mere thought of that possibility made the blond chuckle as he walked silently through the busy halls of the hospital, with his head down to avoid catching unnecessary attention.

Denki found himself knocking on the door louder than necessary for the other to hear before opening without waiting for an answer.

“SHINSOU!” Denki yelled, not really paying attention to anything else other than the purple haired man laying on the hospital bed, the blond’s heart clenched at the sight of him with a couple of cuts on his face and the parts of his arms that were visible, plus the way his eye bags were more prominent today that made Kaminari wonder if he even got any sort of sleep last night.

It was enough for him to start walking towards Shinsou, sitting on the corner of the bed only to reach out for him and pull him into a tight embrace. At first, Shinsou did not return the hug, his arms hanging besides their bodies, that was until Denki pressed himself closer to



him, hiding his face in the crook of the other's neck, his blond hair tickling Shinsou's jaw. That was the moment where Kaminari felt him return the embrace, his arms surrounding his waist. They only separated from each other when they heard someone clearing their throat followed by a loud laugh.

Kaminari looked around the room, he looked at Shinsou, who had a teasing grin on his face, but there, sitting on a chair that was placed next to the bed, was Present Mic, famous for being a famous DJ and for having a radio show but Kaminari also knew him as one of Hitoshi's adoptive dads– Shinsou had told him about that a while ago when Denki heard him talking to him over the phone, resulting on the blond gushing about how he listened his radio show a lot.

“Holy shit,” was all Kaminari could say, which made the man laugh loudly, the sound resonating all over the room. Denki shook his head, making himself snap out of his awe, this was not only the DJ he was used to listening to, he was also Shinsou's dad! He had to put on a good first impression, “I mean, hey, sir?” He said, a little unsure of the word.

Present Mic laughed again, “Sir? Please, call me Hizashi, dear listener.” He said, “All of my son's friends are like my sons, too! Especially his closest and special friends.”


Kaminari's eyes widened at that, not expecting the comment, but before he could answer, Denki heard a groan coming from next to him. Shinsou rolled his eyes in fake annoyance at what his father said, but a faint blush still tinted his cheeks a soft pink, “Kaminari doesn't need to hear that, papa.”

“Whatever you say, kiddo,” Present Mic said as he stood up from his chair to be able to ruffle the purple hair of his son, affectionately. Shinsou shifted in bed at the touch, drawing out a pained groan from his mouth because of the movement.

“Are you okay, dude?” Denki asked, making his way towards the corner of the bed, sitting down on it.

“I'm fine,” Hitoshi said, “It's nothing I can't take.”

Present Mic rolled his eyes playfully, “You have bruised ribs, Hitoshi.” Denki gasped at that, looking at Shinsou, his face a mix of emotions present on his face. If Kaminari wasn't so focused on Hitoshi, looking for more bruises on his face or on what could be seen of his arms, he would have noticed the knowing smile on Present Mic's face before he cleared his throat, gaining their attention.



“I will leave you, troublemakers, by yourselves, while I go with Shou and Eri,” he was almost at the door when he stopped to add with an exaggerated wink, “try to avoid doing things I wouldn’t do.”

The silence fell across the room, only being filled with the heavy breathing of Shinsou.


“I’m sorry,” Hitoshi said a minute later.

“Dude,” Denki said, biting his lip to muffle a laugh that was threatening to come out at the sight of Shinsou so serious and apologetic, “why are you even apologizing? You are the one on a hospital’s bed, I’m just glad you’re alive.”

Shinsou put a hand over his mouth, trying to hide the forming smile on his face, although Denki knew better, returning the smile as Hitoshi shifted to the side, leaving a small space next to him on the little bed, “Come lay down with me, Kitten?” He asked with a grin, patting the spot, to which Denki quickly complied, crawling in the cramped space on bed to lay down next to Hitoshi. It was a little awkward and uncomfortable at first, to settle besides the other man on such a tiny space when neither of them were precisely *short*, but the moment Hitoshi let his hand fall to Kaminari’s head, instinctively, running his fingers through blond strands of hair, Denki’s previous thoughts vanished and he could only focus on Shinsou. On the warmth that his body radiated at how close they were to each other, on the feeling of his fingers petting his hair softly, on how pretty Hitoshi looked, even with his body covered with scratches, cuts and bruises. Denki failed to hide how big his smile got just by looking at the man beside him, thinking of how much he really *loved* him.

Hitoshi and Denki spent the rest of the afternoon talking, just the two of them laying on the hospital bed. At some point, Shinsou had to tell Denki about the accident, which was caused by a drunk asshole who thought it would be a fantastic idea to drive his car to maximum speed on a busy street, crashing with Shinsou’s car in an instant. Next thing he knew, they were being transported to the hospital in an ambulance. According to what Hitoshi told Denki, he got the worst of the crash, since the hit was on the driver’s side, Eri got a few scratches but nothing too serious, and even though Shinsou groaned out of pain more than a couple of times, he insisted it was nothing— much to Kaminari’s worried look.

Kaminari, who was currently showing Shinsou the new cat videos he’d found during his long search on the internet yesterday, had to pause the clip playing on his phone when Shinsou moved to sit on the bed, no longer paying attention to the videos. Denki crooked his head to the side, curiosity obvious in his golden eyes as Hitoshi started talking with a grin, “So, can I have a second first date, Kitten?”



“Duh,” Denki answered without thinking about it twice, laughing as he said so. “How does a cuddle date sound?” The blond asked, wiggling his eyebrows tentatively as he did.

“It sounds perfect,” Hitoshi replied.

A comfortable silence filled the room as golden eyes met with purple ones. They were close, Kaminari noted, so close that he could feel Shinsou’s breath against his face, so close that if he leaned in the right distance, their lips would crash into a kiss. And that was exactly what Denki did, he jumped for the kiss he had craved and imagined for so long, feeling the soft gasp Hitoshi made against his lips before returning the kiss as eagerly as he was. In a matter of seconds, Hitoshi took control of the kiss, maneuvering Denki’s body until he was on his lap, his knees on both sides of the other’s body, trying so hard to not put all of his weight on any injuries.

With both of Hitoshi’s hands on his hips, all Kaminari could do was deepen the kiss, whimpering when a tongue licked over his bottom lip, Shinsou took the opportunity to gently push his tongue inside of Denki’s mouth, both of them enjoying the kiss they shared.

They separated seconds after because of the lack of air, both of their faces flushed red and their lips shiny and swollen. It hadn’t been two seconds since the kiss ended but Denki was already leaning down again, planting many soft and sweet pecks on Shinsou’s lips, speaking against him, his own bottom lip coming out on a pout, “I have wait a long time for this, Toshi, I want more kisses”.

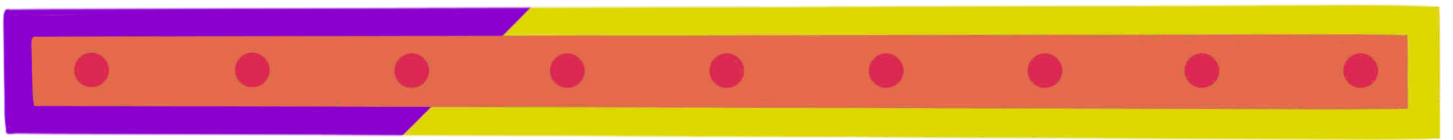
Shinsou snorted before he grabbed Kaminari by the neck of his shirt, bringing him down for another kiss.



Denki and Hitoshi were fast to fall asleep after that, neither of them had gotten any type of real sleep yesterday so, after they shared a few more kisses, both guys were content with just merely sleeping in each other’s arms.

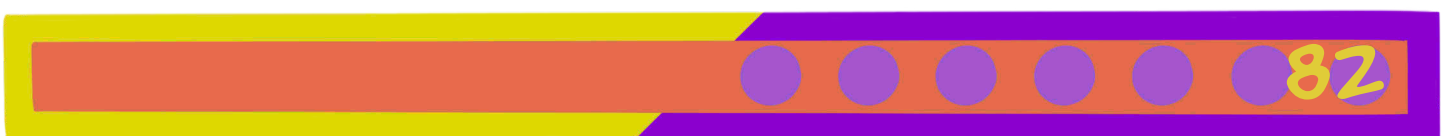
That was how Hizashi found them, Denki laying his head on Hitoshi’s chest while Shinsou had an arm surrounding the blond’s waist, their mouths slightly opened and if Hizashi listened carefully, he could make up the sounds of his son and Kaminari’s heavy breathing. The sight made him laugh fondly.

He had come to his son’s room to check on him, to see if he wanted something else other than




the shitty hospital's food. But looking at his son and, who Hizashi knew was his son's boyfriend, he realized he wasn't going to be able to wake either of them up. Instead, he walked towards the two sleeping boys and threw a blanket he found on the bed's foot over them.

Hizashi couldn't wait to tell his husband about Hitoshi's boyfriend.









AFFOGATO TELL YOU 'BOUT MY HUSBAND A FIC IN SHOTS

EELORA

Ristretto

Another day. Another sunny morning.

He's busy sweeping the front entrance when two sets of footsteps approach. He looks up. Familiar faces, "Shinsou, good morning!"

"Kero!"

He smiles.

"Ochako, Tsu! Welcome back to MindSpark Café! How was your weekend?" he props up the broom and rests against it slightly, "And call me Denki! How many times do I gotta remind you?"

As per usual, the bubbly brunette laughs it off, "I'm only messing with you! Our weekend was great, though! Very relaxing."

"We went to the beach," Tsuyu states, "It would have been nice to spend a few more days there."

Denki hums - he knows the feeling, "Well, don't let me stop you from getting back to the daily grind. I'm sure Hitoshi already has your coffees on the counter for you!" He gives them a thumbs up and ushers for them to go inside.

Peering through the window, he sees the pair waving to Hitoshi. His husband greets them with their drinks, meeting his eyes as he hands them off.

He raises his brows, and Hitoshi raises his own in return. He quickly furrows them into a frown.

From behind the counter, he watches as Hitoshi sighs and turns back the Ochako and Tsuyu, holding up a hand as they try to pay and distinctly saying the words '*it's on the house*'. There



is a moment of back and forth where the girls clearly protest, but Hitoshi holds his ground. As soon as they turn around, Hitoshi looks back up to meet his gaze with an arched brow, ‘*are you happy?*’

Denki gives him a big grin before blowing a kiss, ‘*very*’.

An eye roll, ‘*just finish sweeping*’, he mouths.

He gives him a two-fingered salute and makes a big show of clearing the sidewalk, making sure to say goodbye when Ochako and Tsuyu exit the café.

It’s the same routine every Monday morning. They open their café doors, Denki sweeps the sidewalk, and Hitoshi serves a few of their regulars in the fifteen minutes that Denki is outside for.

When he comes back inside, two of their employees would have just clocked in, and they’re just about to hit peak hour. Hitoshi prepares by downing another triple shot.

Today, Denki decides to feast on a cream puff to get him going, shoving the last bite into Hitoshi’s mouth - much to his husband’s annoyance. Something with a bit more sustenance would do him good. “You ready?” he asks, just as the door chimes when another customer enters.

“Denki, we’ve been doing this for five years,” Hitoshi deadpans, hands already moving expertly around their machinery to pull a shot.

Playfully, Denki bumps his shoulder before purging the steam wand and pulling out a pitcher to fill with milk. Hitoshi hip-checks him back, and childishly, Denki sticks out his tongue in response.

“Oi, Shinsou!” Kouta is frowning at them from the cash register.

“It’s Denki,” the blond responds immediately upon instinct.

Kouta shrugs, “You’re both my boss, and you’re both Shinsou. Does it really matter? Just get me two lattes and one iced americano to-go?”

Denki huffs, but turns to start steaming the milk anyway, “I should totally fire you, y’know? You could really work on your snarky attitude.”



There's a beat of silence as another order is taken, "Nah, you wouldn't. You and Shinsou can hardly be bothered to deal with annoying customers most of the time. And Eri's too nice to kick 'em out."

"Damn," Denki curses quietly beneath his breath, "You're right."

"Yup," Kouta intones, "Add a café mocha and three einspänner to your *growing* number of orders, would you?"

Hitoshi chuckles openly at that, and Denki elbows him in the ribs, "Toshi, you're supposed to be on my side!"

"I am on your side," Hitoshi grins, "I'm standing right next to you."

For a moment, Denki blinks blankly, before the realisation kicks in and he scowls. He puts the caps on the two lattes aggressively, "I didn't ask to be attacked on this Monday morning! Eri, switch with me!"

Eri's head pops out from the back kitchen, where she's icing some of their cakes, "Yes, Shinsou!"

He throws his hands up in the air, exasperated, "It's *Denki*!"

Their regular patrons laugh, used to the antics of the café owners. Denki finds his anger dissipating at the sound of cheer.


Yeah, it's just another day at their café.

The morning rush comes and goes. Denki finishes decorating the cakes, slicing them, and putting them in the display cabinet along with their other freshly baked pastries.

After that, he focuses on interacting with the customers - warming up their pastries and asking about their weekends as they wait for their coffees. He's happy to see everyone leaving with a smile on their face.

Even though it's lunch, it's not too busy and the married couple are fine to handle the rest of the day by themselves. In the lull of the afternoon, the pair finally have a moment to relax.

Denki abandons the front counter for the second time that day, "I'm gonna go check on the stock."



Walking to their storeroom, he begins making a count of their coffee beans and flour sacks. Eyes sweep over the sugar as he pencils in their stock levels in a notebook. He opens their fridge and begins counting through their ingredients. They're a small café, but they receive a fair amount of foot traffic from the business district on the other block and the college nearby.

A soft knock on the wall has him looking over his shoulder to find Hitoshi leaning up against the door frame.

"Hm? Toshi, what's up?"

"I was just thinking that you really hate counting the stock," Hitoshi says hesitantly, "So I can't help but think that you're avoiding me. Is it because of what I said earlier with Kouta?"

Pencilling in how many blocks of butter they had left, he snaps the notebook shut and fully turns around to face him, "Well, I'm not mad, if that's what you're thinking."

Hitoshi doesn't seem reassured, "Then?"

Denki stares at him, only the buzz of their fridge filling the silence. Hitoshi shuffles nervously, pushing off from the frame and beginning to slowly walk over, a worried look in his eye appearing when Denki takes a step back.

"It's just, there's a new recipe I want to try, so I have to make sure there's enough supplies for me to play around with," he finally says with a nonchalant shrug.

Hitoshi is frozen mid-step as he speaks. His expression morphs into a frown, but there's no menace behind it, "You..."


"You looked pretty scared for a moment there," Denki chuckles, "Worried I'd kick you out of the bedroom to suffer on the couch with the cats?"

Shoulders seem to hunch over in defeat as Hitoshi lets out a big sigh.

The bell attached to their door chimes and Denki is immediately moving toward the front. He pats Hitoshi's shoulder on the way past, bouncing in his step to reach up and peck the man's cheek, "Gotta keep you on your toes somehow, don't I?"

He then leaves Hitoshi there in the back kitchen to greet the customer.

Denki doesn't recognise them, so he puts on his most friendly smile as he approaches. "Hi, welcome to MindSpark!" He says, "I haven't seen you here before, are you new to the area?"



“Uh, not really. I was just walking by and decided to pop in for once,” a pause as they cleared their throat, then, “I can already tell that I’ve been missing out, though.”

He nods in understanding. Their darker colour scheme wasn’t the most inviting. “Well, we do have a great menu. And seasonal specials too!”

The customer looks around, “Are you the only one working?”

Denki tilts his head at the question, “No. The husband is here too, but he’s out the back.” He jabs his thumb toward the door he’d walked through.

“Oh, like, the owner’s husband?”

He laughs, “Yeah, you could say that! So, do you need help deciding?” He had forgotten that he’d taken his ring off to decorate the cakes.

“Well,” they lean over to rest their elbow on the adjacent display cabinet, conspicuously curling their arm in toward their bicep, “What’s your best seller?”

Denki now watches the customer flex before him, unimpressed. Ah, he supposes he was a little slow to pick up the cues. It had been a while since a customer had tried to flirt with him. He quickly pastes on another smile, “Are we talking drinks or pastries?”

Eyebrows raise suggestively, “Whatever *you* have to offer.”

“Uh huh,” he nods, biting down a more sarcastic response, “Everything was freshly baked this morning if you’re hungry?”

“I’m not really hungry, but I am *thir*-”

He points to the menu, “Then, our espresso cream latte has been quite popular lately? It’s like dalgona coffee. Have you heard of it? Made popular in Korea, but originally from Greece. It’s coffee and sugar that’s been whisked 400 times - quite sweet - but very refreshing. Mixed into ice and milk. With our latte, we offer a selection of alternative milks if you’re lactose intolerant, although I think it works best with regular, full-fat cow’s milk. Super delish. Would you like to try that?”

“I mean,” they falter, “Sure?”

“Great! Was there anything else for today?” He asks as he punches it into the register.



“What about your number? Is that on the menu?”

Denki holds back a grimace at that. When was the last time he'd heard that cringey line? He automatically recalls his usual response.

“Oh, well we do have a landline here for catering requests, let me just go find our business card...” he shuffles around the counter for a moment, internally howling at how flustered the customer was becoming.

“Wait! I - ah - didn't mean the store's number,”

He nods in fake understanding, “I see, you want the owner's number? I can just call the husband out and -”

“Aaaand I'm going to have to cut in right here,” a baritone voice drawls. An arm comes between him and the register as he's lightly pushed away, “I'll take over. Denki, *sweetie*, why don't you take a break?”

Denki feels relief at Hitoshi's interruption. There were only so many ways he was capable of deflecting. Familiar amethyst orbs stare down at him, filled with jealous rage. As much as he wants to kiss that anger away, he instead responds in his usual cheeky manner.

“Sure thing, *hubby*!” he chirps with a wink.


The customer mouths the word ‘hubby’ silently as the gears turn. Their arm finally slides off the cabinet as they straighten, “W-Wait... you... you're?!”

“The owner? Sure am! Or, at least, a co-owner.”

He checks the clock, untying his apron and moving away from the counter and swiftly towards the door that stated, ‘Staff Only’. “I'll be upstairs feeding Ameowricano and Cappawccino!”

Disappearing behind the door, he's already part-way up the stairs when he hears a strangled sound from below. Huh, Hitoshi must be giving the customer more of a hard time than usual.

He bites his lip, trying to stop a giddy smile from appearing. Hitoshi could be so damn attractive when he was jealous sometimes, even after six years of marriage, he still liked to solve the puzzle of one Shinsou Hitoshi.



Demanding yowls have him quickly rushing up the rest of the staircase. Those little munchkins sure kept a tight schedule!

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Espresso

Denki smiles as he pulls out a tray of croissants out of the oven. They're perfectly golden - crisp - but flaky on the outside and buttery on the inside. Not to mention the smell. He's just set them down when Eri calls his name from the front of the café.

"Shinsou, there's a customer here looking for you!"

He quickly rips off the oven mitts and takes a moment to wipe the sweat beading on his forehead, "Coming! Eri could you finish up with the croissants?"

Sweeping outside, he steps up to the counter and looks up. Only to find a familiar face staring back at him.

"Hitoshi! What are you doing here?"

"Well for one - I live here. And two, can't I come to see my husband working?"

Denki pouts - attempting to look disappointed, but it was hard when Hitoshi clearly made a point to still spend time with him, "You see me at work every day. It's your day off! Go out and enjoy the sun or something!"


"Nah, I'm already enjoying my dose of sunlight right here," he drapes slightly over the register. He's smug; he knows he's won.

"Aw, you're such a flirt!" Eyes brighten as his expression morphs into something sappy, "So, how many shots?"

He holds up two slender fingers, "Just a double."

Denki nods, spinning on his heel and grabbing a glass, "Comin' right up honey-bun!"

It ends up taking a few minutes to get the drink ready, as a group of elderly people out for Sunday brunch come into the store. Of course, Denki serves them first - his husband could wait, and if he were that desperate for coffee he could walk around the counter and make it himself.



Still, Hitoshi is happy to wait. He's content to watch his social butterfly husband make small talk with the customers and prepare their drinks.

He rests against the counter, waiting patiently. Their café is busy - not unusual for a Sunday morning - and he feels a little bit of pride in how he and Denki were the ones to build this.

"Hey there Cutie-Patootie, your coffee is finally ready. Sorry it took so long!" Denki waves the glass full of liquid stimulant in front of him.

Hitoshi takes it with a nod, "It's fine, there were customers."

Denki reaches out to pinch his cheek, "Still, if I'd had the choice, I would definitely serve you first! Now, you should go outside and get some fresh air. Take the cats out for a bike ride, or something. I mean it."

Hitoshi rubs at his cheek when Denki finally lets go. Only to be surprised as Denki makes use of his hidden strength to grab him by the shoulders and turn him around, giving him a playful slap on the butt to send him off.

"*Denki!*" he hisses, embarrassed at the display in front of a crowded café.

For the most part, people are immersed in their own conversations to really notice. But it's the small group of elderly people who fall silent at the sight.

"Ah, sorry..." Denki peers around Hitoshi's shoulder, resting a hand upon it, "Don't mind us." They don't seem happy however, with one of them even standing to approach the couple - eyes narrowed at Denki's hand. He slowly takes it off and brings it back down to his side.

The customer huffs and pushes Hitoshi behind them in a projective manner, "Young man, this poor visitor is just trying to enjoy his coffee, so perhaps you should stop making moves - otherwise I'll report you for harassment!"

"Oh no," Hitoshi tries to placate, "It's fine, really."

They wave their hand in a gesture that has Hitoshi falling silent. "It's okay, son - I'll take care of this," they turn back to face Denki, "You youngsters these days have no respect! Where are your manners?! You should be ashamed of yourself! As a hospitality employee you should know better! How must it feel when you're harassed in your workplace? Why, I - I would never have suggested this place to eat if I had known the employees were like this. I'll be leaving a bad review once we make our way out of here - and cancel our pastry order whilst you're at



it!”

Once Denki looks thoroughly chastised, the elderly customer finally backs off with a satisfied expression.

“Now, are you sure you’re alright? How about I get the manager and tell them what’s just happened? We’re a witness to your claims.”

“I-it’s alright... I know you mean well, and uh, I appreciate you trying to help,” Hitoshi fumbles around the counter and makes his way over to Denki’s side, “But it’s really okay - we know each other. He’s my husband...”

“W-we run this café together,” Denki hastily adds.

There’s a moment of silence between the two parties that has Denki sweating. In the background, the toaster pings - signifying that a plate was heated and ready to serve. Denki coughs, “Erm, would you still like your spinach and ricotta roll?”

The awkward atmosphere stretches on until the customer grins, “Well, of course! Why didn’t you just say you were together in the first place? My goodness, now that I look at you two, you remind me of my own grandchildren!” They take a seat back at the table, turning back to their friends, “Enough with that, however. I’m rather famished, how about you?”

“Oh, quite so. I might even order another slice of cake!”

The customer looks over to Denki and raises their brow, “What’s the hold-up, dear? I thought my food was ready?”

Hitoshi elbows him in the side, and he jerks up, “Right! Just a minute!” He spins on his heel but is pulled by the waist back toward his husband.

Warm lips are pressed against his cheek and the faint scent of coffee brushes against his face, “I think I’ll go on that bike ride now,” Hitoshi lets him go, smirking, “Thanks for the coffee, kitten.”

Denki can feel the flush rising up his cheeks as the elderly group swoon in the background. He was going to get absolutely *dogpiled* with questions - he could feel it in his bones. He shuffles nervously on his feet, “Wait, Hitoshi - you can’t possibly leave me by myself now!”

“What do you mean? It’s my day off. Besides, you still have Eri here with you. Though, I don’t think she’s really on your side here,” his chin juts back out toward the tables.



“What?” The blond turns to see his employee standing by the customers with a sweet smile. His heart drops a little at the sight.

“Yes!” She tells them, “They’ve been married for six years!”

The whole group giggles, eyeing him like predators would to prey, “Oh, you simply have to tell us more!”

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Doppio

“Welcome to MindSpark, how can I -”

“Get me a double-shot, caramel frap, add 2 pumps of chocolate and extra whipped cream. Stat.”

His hand hovered over the register, “Uh - sorry - we don’t serve frappuccinos here. We could get a caramel milkshake for you instead and add your shots in if you’d like?”

The customer stares in mild shock, “No frappuccinos?”

A shake of his head to confirm. “Sorry, no.”


“What kind of place doesn’t serve frappuccinos?!”

“Clearly not this kind of place...?” He inwardly bites his tongue. Had he just awakened the beast? Damn his foot-in-mouth syndrome. He tries to correct his outburst, “But! We do have alternatives. It might be nice to try something new, right? Who knows, you might like it even more than a frappuccino!”

Wow, he didn’t know that people could become so red in the face from anger. He could feel the blood draining from his own in comparison. Five years at this gig and he still felt like a coward in front of the troublesome customers. He definitely wished Kouta was here right now for his give-no-fucks attitude.

“S-So, what do ya say?”

“What do I say?” they hiss - and if looks could kill he’d definitely be dead by now, “I say, I’d like to see your manager!”



And there it is. If he could have a dollar for every time a customer said that - well - he'd be about \$25 richer. In a practiced manner, he responds, "I don't have a manager, but I can get you the owner?"

A gleam appears in the customer's eyes. They've fallen right into his trap, "Yes! Get your owner!"

"Okay," He looks past the customer's shoulder and calls, "*Shinsou*, this customer would like to speak to you?"

Hitoshi looks up from wiping the tables with raised brows, '*Shinsou? Really, this again?*' he mouths, then rolls his eyes when Denki shrugs with a mischievous grin. Fine, he'd play the game.

From the corner, a group of their regulars - read: friends - fall silent. Bakugou takes a long, slow gulp of his coffee, but his gaze is clearly upon the commotion at the counter. Mina is being less than subtle as she pulls her phone out to record.

Hitoshi approaches with an apathetic expression, "What can I do for you today?"

"This man needs to be fired!"

Sero spits out his drink, coughing slightly, whilst Kirishima pats his back, poorly attempting to stifle his own laughter. Denki almost wishes he could hand them some popcorn.

Hitoshi musters a half-hearted apologetic look, "I'm sorry, but no-can-do."

"Why? He said you're the owner."

"Well, you can leave a complaint in the suggestion box and I'll make sure my boss gets it."

"But you're the *owner*," they state, like he's incapable of understanding Japanese.

"Yes, I know," he responds in monotone, "I am the owner. But there's also my *boss*."

They pull back, "You have a boss?"

"Yup," a shrug, "He has a pretty big say in who gets hired or fired and what not."

"W-Well, let me speak to your boss, then! Because clearly, you're all inappropriate!"



“Incompetent,” Hitoshi corrects, but they glance at him with a confused expression. He decides it’s not worth it to explain.

A huff, “Whatever. Just get me your boss! Who is it?”

There’s a tense silence, and Hitoshi gives him a look - telling him he’s over it already. Well, he supposes there’s only so much problematic customers Hitoshi can stand to deal with. He did a good job playing his role.

Denki now steps forward, the biggest grin on his face. He thinks he can hear his friends cheering him on quietly in the background.

“That would me,” he holds out his hand for a handshake, “I’m ‘Boss.’”

Another silence. Denki lowers his hand - he hadn’t wanted to touch it anyway.

The customer seems to have found their voice again, but all that comes out is a stuttered, “But- What?”

“Apologies for the confusion, but it seems to have slipped my mind that I, too, own this place,” Denki sighs in dramatic sorrow.

“You... own the place?”


“Yep! We’re husbands and co-owners! I’m the Spark, and hotstuff here is the Mind! Literally. I mean - I come up with the menu and he does our taxes,” he laughs.

Gaping, their gaze frantically flickers between Hitoshi and Denki, searching for a sign, “Prove it.”

“What? That we’re married?” Denki raises his brows, “Well sure, if that’s what you want.” He rounds the counter, walking straight over to Hitoshi just as the customer starts to protest one more.

“Wait-”

“Shinsou Hitoshi, the love of my life. My one and only. My ‘before anyone else,’” he announces dramatically, “Will you bestow upon me - your lawfully wedded husband - a kiss?” He closes his eyes and pouts his lips.



Hitoshi snorts, sliding his arms around Denki's waist and leans in, lips smacking loudly against the other's, "As my lawfully wedded husband, you never have to ask. In fact, I'm feeling rather generous, so you may have another." He leans in again, barely registering the fact that the customer had already stormed out of the café in a huff.

"Uh, guys? They already left, so you can knock it off now," an awkward chuckle has them pulling apart.

Denki blinks at the sight of his friends still sitting at their usual table, "Oh, I forgot you guys were here!"

"Rude!" Sero and Mina whine. There's a moment of pause before they all break into laughter.

"E-Excuse me... could one of you please take my order?" A nervous voice says, and then in an even quieter tone, "I've been waiting for ten minutes..."

They all whip around, but Denki is the first one to jump into action - practically jumping the counter in his haste, "Oh *shit*, sorry Kouda! Just the usual for today? It's on the house!"



Lungo

It's early Wednesday morning, and the café has built up a small queue of people on their way to work and college, or people doing a coffee run for their co-workers. Most looked tired and ready for a healthy dose of caffeine to get them started for the day, but for Denki and Hitoshi, they'd already been up for hours baking pastries out back.

Hitoshi stifles another yawn, shoving a savoury croissant into the toaster to warm up and melt the cheese. He gives himself a quick three seconds to rest his eyes before turning around to face the rest of the store. Eri is handling the morning crowd well, being the sweetheart she is.

If anything, her presence has helped to bring in more customers.

It's Denki that Hitoshi is worried about. As the orders build up, his partner seems to be struggling and is falling behind. He hears a shaky exhale from Denki's lips.

"Baby cakes, how many shots have you had?" he finally sets his own task aside to smooth his



hands down tense shoulders.

“Uhhh, five? But I can do this. I’m okay...” Denki sounds unsure as he attempts to pour the milk into the mug with unsteady hands.

Hitoshi grabs his wrists, “Here, let me do it. How about you switch with Eri and take the orders?”

The grip on the jug remains tight as Denki peers into his soul with an almost crazed look, “No. I have been up since three am perfecting that choux pastry for the eclairs, I am *not* about to *stand* there and be *happy* for the customers -”

He’s cut off as Hitoshi takes the milk pitcher and mug away from him, using more force this time. “Yeah, no. I’m definitely taking this from you. Denki, I love you, but having five shots of espresso is not okay. Nevermind the customers, you need the day off.”

A frown, “But *you* -”

“I have been drinking nearly a dozen shots every day for the past 15 years,” Amethyst orbs give him a pointed look, and Denki relents.

“Fine,” he turns on his heel, fixing him with his best glare, “But you better watch yourself babe.”

Hitoshi rolls his eyes - his husband could be such a drama queen.


Even so, he keeps an eye out as Denki stumbles his way to the staff-only door, and only turns back to face the customers when his instincts tell him that Denki’s safe inside their apartment

He sighs, “Sorry for the wait, your latte will be ready in just a minute.”

The day drags on - it always does when Denki’s not downstairs, beside him.

When eight pm hits, he finally flicks off the lights to the café and flips the open sign to closed. He treks upstairs, with some leftover quiches on a warm plate.

Entering quietly, he toes off his shoes and shoves his feet into slippers before making his way into the kitchen to put the food down. He shakes his head - a smile tugging at his lips - at the sight of three dozen eclairs, neatly lined up and drizzled with a chocolate ganache.



He had no doubt that Denki had run out of fuel by now and was likely dealing with the aftermath of having over-caffeinated himself. Quietly, he leaves the kitchen and turns the corner into the living area.

As expected, Denki has crashed and is slumped over on the couch.

Half of his face is buried into a pillow that props his head up, but his eyes are distant and glazed over - staring into empty space.

Hands absently comb through Cappawccino's fur.

Cappawccino seems to enjoy the attention, kneading Denki's thigh whenever his hand stops still for too long.

"Denki," he softly calls.

"Whey," a quiet murmur in response. Hitoshi knows well enough that Denki was trying his best to say 'what'.

"How are you feeling?"

A smaller almost child-like response; trailing off at the end, "Wheeey..." *M tired.*

"Want me to take you to bed?"

"Nn... whey?" *Come with?*

Hitoshi rolls his eyes, "Alright, I'll join you."

"Wheyyyy~"

With that, Hitoshi gathers his husband into his arms and takes him into their bedroom. By the time the clock hits midnight, Hitoshi's mind has no plans of giving him rest anytime soon. He's fully awake when Denki rolls over - eyes piercing through the darkness and completely focused.

"Thanks for being my husband 'Toshi," he snuggles closer.

Hitoshi gladly wraps his arms around the smaller man, pulling him close, "I love you too." And with the extra warmth, he finally succumbs to the pull of sleep.

Another day. Another quiet evening.



The Extra Shot

“Heh. So, I was thinking, we should replace our menu with just puns.”

“Fuck no.”

“Well I, for one, think it’s a *mug*-nificent idea.”

“No.”

“Okay, okay... I have a *latte* ideas though, so if you ever change your mind...”

Hitoshi groans, “Denki, I swear. You’re *mocha* me crazy.”

“Oof, well that one was a little *weak*. It’s alright, we’ve all *bean* there.





TWELVE MOONS QUINTESENTILA

Tags: werewolf Shinsou, human Kaminari, quirkless AU, tooth rotting fluff, angst lite

NEW MOON

The first time he saw Kaminari Denki was a Hail Mary. His saving grace, dressed in an oversized band t-shirt and ripped jeans. The way the light caught golden hair and lit in golden eyes made him look like he should have been in a church. Shinsou would be faithful if that was who he prayed to.

The arch of his neck was as charming as the guileless angle of his smile. The electric ozone that filled his nose felt like the scent of an incoming storm and he couldn't have been more ready to be in the eye of it.

All of which he chalked up to low blood sugar.

Shinsou Hitoshi was not a man who felt things quickly. Or at least that was what he tried to convince people. He didn't get attached and he absolutely did not want a mate, no matter how much several different parts of himself craved it.


He'd rather catch chlamydia than feelings.

Feelings, without a doubt, were the most bothersome part about being a human being. That was part of what he loved so much about being a wolf as well. Wolves didn't have complicated emotions. At least none that he had experienced thus far, and none that he was interested in experiencing.

But Denki looked like liquid gold as he slid between Shinsou and the counter, provocative and teasing with his smile and his freckled nose. But there was nothing flirtatious in his eyes. Just interest.

"So how about I buy you that drink you're going to order and then you drink it with me?" He asked, bright and effervescent, champagne bubbles in Shinsou's chest as he watched his smile catch the light.

"My order is to-go, but you can have my number and we can get the next one together?" He



offered, wondering where his usual antisocial defenses were. Had they been burnt away in the holy light of his smile? Or was it just that he couldn't stand to say no to someone who looked so sweet?

Whatever the answer was, it landed him with a coffee date next week Thursday, where Kaminari (Kaminari!) cupped his coffee in his hands and confessed to being so nervous that he had almost tripped over his own shoes when trying to hit on him.

It had only been through the grace of whatever angel watched over other angels that Kaminari hadn't knocked his front teeth out on the countertop instead of asking Shinsou out.

Shinsou preferred this option. The one where they drank more than one cup of coffee each and Denki's foot knocked against his jeans and gold eyes met lavender and neither one apologised, even though Kaminari's cheeks pinked like a timelapse video of flowers blooming.

WAXING CRESCENT

One week, just for one, Shinsou vanishes off the face of the earth. And Denki is so terrified that he's been ghosted that he can barely breath for seven days.

His whole chest feels like it's going to implode and he can't help but rewind through every conversation that they've had in the past few weeks, when he thought that they were getting on so well. Was it something that he had said? Did he have something stuck between his teeth the whole time? He can't think of a single thing that he did wrong.

Only by day three of seven every single thing he's ever done is wrong and by day five, he's resolved to punch Shinsou square in his stupid perfect teeth if he ever sees him again.

But that isn't what happens when he sees him.

Instead of fists flying it's Denki leaping to hug him, his arms flung around Shinsou's neck and dragging him down into a fierce embrace.

"You don't write, you don't call!" he scolds, half laughing and half so wonderfully relieved when he sees the sheepish chagrin where Shinsou is ducking his head to try and hide the expression on his face.

"I was dealing with some things, it... just got away from me," his mouth pulled to the side in distaste and Denki huffed, rolling his eyes.



“Next time you don’t have to deal with them alone okay?”

“Do you want to go out with me? Like on a date?” The words just fell out and heat flashed across Shinsou’s cheeks as soon as he said it. Denki’s head was spinning with stars, and he laughs.

“Absolutely!”

FIRST QUARTER MOON

They’re both ridiculously out of place at the restaurant that Hitoshi has picked out for them. Even though Denki in a suit with his silky lavender tie and pocket square looks like he should never, ever be dressed in anything but the finest of bespoke suits. Hitoshi knows what he looks like in ripped jeans with a faded band t-shirt that almost hangs from one shoulder and knows how utterly beautiful that is too. He’s torn.

But it’s clear from the way that he tugs at his collar that Denki isn’t the most comfortable in his suit jacket. Even if he does look like he just stepped off the silver screen.


When the waiter asks Hitoshi about wine, he feels the bottom drop out of his stomach and he opens his mouth to ask what he would suggest they have when Denki’s voice cuts him off and he orders a claret from the menu.

“You know about wine?” He asks, relieved that he was saved the embarrassment of not knowing anything in front of the waiter. He doesn’t like strangers, and he doesn’t like strangers judging him even more. But Denki doesn’t seem to have that problem, or the inclination to judge. It’s refreshing and delightful all at once and all he wants to do is bathe in his presence and let the golden light of Denki’s aura sooth his ills.

Maybe it’s a little soon to be this besotted, but he is.

“Yeah, I used to work as a waiter, it’s crazy how fast you pick that stuff up when you have to rattle it off every day. I hope I didn’t bully you into choosing that one?” A sudden frown pulls between his brows and Hitoshi fights back the mad urge to kiss it away.

“No, not at all. You saved me, actually. I don’t know a thing about wine.” Shinsou admits, with a shrug and a flush to his cheeks. He should have known something about the menu before he picked the restaurant. Or at least thought ahead to what they might order while they’re here. He really hasn’t done any planning and the realisation is making his stomach sink through his seat to the floor.



“Really? Oh my god, that’s such a relief! You seem so... so, I don’t know, sophisticated and oh my god, I thought I was going to embarrass myself so badly. I’m so glad you’re a normal person!” Denki’s laugh is angelic, like a choir that’s blessed Shinsou’s ears and even though it doesn’t sound like it should be a compliment, he can’t help but smile.

“I’m really nothing special,” he agrees. Just an average man compared to the deity across from him, but he realises that he might have said the wrong thing when Denki’s lips pull into a frown.

“You’re definitely special, Shinsou. There’s just something about you. You’re all ... I don’t know, mysterious. It’s pretty cool. I like that about you. But I also want to get to know you because it’s definitely not just being mysterious that makes you cool, you know? How far in my mouth is my foot right now? I’m sorry, I’m so nervous, I can’t stop talking,” his sheepish laugh is just as beautiful as it was before.

The waiter arrived at Denki’s shoulder, pouring their wine and asking if sirs were ready to order just yet. “No, thank you,” Shinsou said, nodding to the waiter and giving Denki the smallest of smiles, “We’re still deciding.” The waiter walked off and Denki put a hand to his mouth to smother his smile.

“You didn’t put your foot in your mouth,” Shinsou said, with a slightly bolder smile, “In fact, that’s why I agreed to go out with you in the first place. I really like the sound of your voice.”


And Denki’s fingers curled against his lips, a flush high on his cheekbones and a very flattered smile playing about his mouth as he mumbled, “Oh.”

WAXING GIBBOUS

Afternoon sunlight streams warm and soporific across their legs as they laze on Shinsou’s couch, Denki lying on his stomach and propped up on his elbows, and Hitoshi lying on his back with his arms folded behind his head.

“So, I’ve been thinking,” Denki said, fingers in the tassel of a scatter cushion that Shinsou’s Papa had given him as a house-warming gift. Because Shinsou just wasn’t the kind of man who bought himself scatter cushions even when he very desperately needed a little personality in his apartment.

Personally, he was of the opinion that he might tear scatter cushions with his claws once a month, but so far he’d managed to keep this one intact, even if a few of his bed pillows had suffered an unfortunate fate with his lunar changes.



“A dangerous pastime. What about?” Shinsou hummed, only half paying attention to what Denki was saying and half wondering if he had somehow deliberately avoided wrecking this cushion because of its sentimental value.

“About us. And how there should be an us,” Denki said, eyes cast down at the tassel, glancing up through golden lashes to try and gauge Shinsou’s reaction. Shinsou, on the other hand, was a little thrown. He wriggled a little, to sit up somewhat. An us. As in he and him and.

“Oh. I,” he stopped and closed his mouth. There were champagne bubbles fizzing in his stomach and chest, and mouth, and, “Yes? Yes! No, absolutely. Yes, there should be an us,” half the words came out laughing, which he hadn’t expected.

He hadn’t expected to be so giddy with it, but he leant down to press an awkwardly angled kiss to Kaminari’s smiling lips.

FULL MOON

“You know, there’s been something I want to talk about,” Denki’s words broke the comfortable silence between them as they both sat reading on the couch that they had confirmed their relationship on just two months ago.


“Yeah, Kitten? What is it?” Shinsou let his arm lol across the back of the couch, utterly at peace in a way he hadn’t really felt before being with Denki. He’d never known he could feel so comfortable with another person.

“You ghost me, once a month,” there was a sideways tilt to the blond’s lips and he was looking at Shinsou intently. Those golden eyes always saw so much more than he thought they did, and right now they must have been seeing panic. He could only hope that he didn’t assume the worst of him for it.

“It’s regular as clockwork, and for at least three days. I wouldn’t usually bug about three days, but we’ve kept pretty close contact most of the time so it’s enough to worry me when you do.”

Shinsou hung his head, looking down at the same tasseled pillow that Denki had been playing with when he had asked him to be his boyfriend. It really did seem like such a stupidly huge secret. And such a dumb one. Kaminari wasn’t stupid, even if he was an airhead.

There was no way in hell that he was ever going to believe that his boyfriend was a werewolf. There just wasn’t any way at all.



“I-” Shinsou let out a long sigh, “I don’t- I can’t explain myself,” he tried again, staring at his hands, “I want to, but I don’t think I can just yet. I’m not- I’m not doing anything bad or strange, I just need space around then and I’m sorry but it’s not going to change. I don’t want you to be mad at me, and I want you to know that I’m not mad at you, it’s just not something I can explain right now. I hope that’s okay, I don’t want there to be any misunderstanding between us,” the words felt like such a cop out, but it was all he had to defend himself against his own nature.

Denki stared at him, hurt all over his face. Slowly, he tried to arrange it back into something a little more neutral.

“Okay, I guess I can understand that,” he said, measuring his words out. He let out a sigh through his nose, “Look, I hate to jump and run, but I’m gonna go home, okay? I just need to be by myself for a little bit, okay? Date night on Tuesday, right?”

Shinsou’s heart sank. Of course he’d hurt him. As much as he didn’t want to, there was no way he could have avoided it. Hopefully this hurt him the least.

“Date night on Tuesday,” he echoed, forcing a smile onto his lips to mirror Denki’s strained pull of lips as he stood and kissed his cheek, not waiting for Shinsou to see him to the door.


WANING GIBBOUS

Tuesday was tender. They had texted and sent pictures but it had taken a while to get back into their usual rhythm, and when they did see each other, Denki picking Shinsou up to take him to the carnival that was in town, it was a little off.

The hurt that they couldn’t talk about was simmering just under the surface, and Shinsou wanted to say a hundred and one things to try and excuse himself and make it better and make Kaminari understand that he should be fine with it because it was three days a month, and it wasn’t like he was off with someone else, he was literally locked in his apartment.

But he’d spoken to his dad about it, and he knew, after being parentally rapped over the knuckles for not thinking about it from Denki’s perspective, that the fact that Shinsou didn’t want to be around him for those three days must hurt for someone who constantly thrived off of attention the way Denki did.

And what was even more frustrating was that it wasn’t even that he didn’t want to be around him, it was that he couldn’t.



Not without explaining that he spent about two days, a day and then a half on each side, in various degrees of four-legged-ness.

“So, carnivals,” Denki said, trying to drag the sluggish conversation along, and Shinsou had a sick twist of fear in his gut that this was going to be the end of their relationship if he didn’t get it together and get the conversation flowing. His relationship with Denki, just like the other relationship and a half he had had in his life, was going to end because of his lycanthropy and his inability to talk to people he loved.

“I’ve only really been to one carnival,” he admitted, trying to dredge up something to talk about, “Right after I was adopted, Papa thought it would be a fun family outing but I think he didn’t know too much about me just yet and my Dad hated every minute of it-”

“So it was the wrong choice,” Denki said, and Shinsou saw his hands tighten around the steering wheel as they passed by the streetlights on the highway.

“No, no! God, no, it’s great! Really, I promise. I ate myself sick on cotton candy and drank a bubblegum flavoured slushie that made me piss blue, it was wonderful. It was my first time having a proper family outing. I love carnivals,” he turned to give Denki a little smile and felt his stomach flutter seeing the shy, return smile.


“Seriously? So what else did you do? Aside from pee blue food colouring?” Denki giggled and Hitoshi couldn’t help chuckling along.

“It’s no joke, my tongue was blue for a whole week after that, no matter how hard I brushed it! But we went on the carousels and the bumper cars and the teacups, that might have been why I puked actually. Um.... The hall of mirrors was fun, and the roller coaster. What about you, what’s your favourite thing about a carnival?”

“I like the games along the sides, the ones where you play tombola or ring toss or basketball and try to win prizes. I know they’re basically all rigged but I love them all the same. And the ferris wheel! The ferris wheel is my favourite, I love the view.” Denki sighed, fingers spread and more relaxed now as he tried to describe what it was like.

“Seeing the lights from all the way up there, everything twinkling and spread out below you in the dark. It’s just perfect, I love it.”

“Really? I’ve never been on a ferris wheel before,” Shinsou said, relaxing into his seat and settling in to watch Denki as he spoke. The knot of sick tension in his stomach had eased now and he was feeling much more comfortable.



“Oh my god, seriously? They have such a nice one here, can we go on? Please, please please?” It was such a relief how excited Denki was, and Hitoshi pursed his lips. He wasn’t exactly afraid of heights, per se, but they weren’t his favourite thing. Which was why he had never gone on one. But the thought of going with Denki was just too good to pass up on.

“Sure.”

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“You said this was your favourite bit, right?” Shinsou said as they walked down the corridor of food vendors selling everything from hotdogs and waffles and crepes to Ikayaki and Nikuman. Taiyaki and Takoyaki rubbed shoulders with pork buns and mochi sellers. Cotton candy and candy apples were almost overflowing from the stalls that weren’t selling cheap games and toys for children to play with. There were balloon animals and helium balloons that might float off into the starry sky if left in the hands of an easily distracted child.

The smells of the fair were almost overwhelming and Shinsou didn’t know where he wanted to sniff first but he knew he was going to be getting pork buns at some point.

Roasted sweet potato and wood smoke was thick in the air as they walked past a vendor, who was yelling to sell his wares. Simply because of the smell, Shinsou bought two, bringing them back to Denki so they could share the soft, sweet vegetable.

“So we eat at least one healthy thing tonight,” he teased, and Denki laughed, covering his mouth so he didn’t spit potato everywhere.

“We’re at a carnival, healthy isn’t the point,” he giggled, “Come on, let’s get crepes,” he added, barely waiting for Shinsou to take the bite he was in the middle of before dragging him towards the middle of the row where there was a brightly coloured crepe stand. Ordering one full of strawberries for Shinsou and one full of banana for himself, both dripping with chocolate and cream.

They stood by the sidelines for a minute, licking cream and nutella off their fingers and plotting their next move. Shinsou finished his first, wiping his fingers down with a napkin, he then went to go and buy tokens at the front tent so that they could play the games, while Denki picked the one that he wanted.

Spotting the blond in the crowd, he moved towards him.



“Hey,” he leant in, catching his elbow and speaking into his ear to be heard above the crowd, “Did you find something that you want?”

“Yeah,” Denki pouted, looking a little miffed, “I really wanted that pikachu plushie, but some kid just walked off with it.”

“Oh no, Kitten, I’m sorry,” he reached down to squeeze Denki’s hand. “Let’s go try the bumper cars and see if we can find something else.”

They didn’t find anything else that Denki wanted in the way of prizes, but they played a few games and tried every ride they could think of, including the teacups, before settling in to eat their way through the vendors before it was time for them to go on the ferris wheel. Denki, clever thing that he was, had booked tickets ahead of time so they had a set slot to be on and didn’t have to stand in a queue for ages to try and get a spot.

The time for them to head on over was slowly approaching and Shinsou excused himself to go to the toilet.

Denki didn’t mind, and he stood beside the ferris wheel, looking up. And looking around.

Shinsou was gone a rather long time, and Denki was beginning to suspect that he might have been dumped at the carnival when he felt a tap on his shoulder.

Spinning around, he was met face to face with a fuzzy purple dog.

“What-?”

The dog lowered and Shinsou peaked out from behind it, “Hey Kitten, sorry for the wait. It took me a few tries to win this guy. I think the games really are rigged. I know you wanted the pikachu, but this was all I could get,” he shrugged a little and looked down.

Denki couldn’t help but smile. Leaning in, he tipped Shinsou’s chin up to give him a soft kiss. “It’s perfect, now come on lover boy, before we’re late for the wheel!”

Once they were settled in their swaying booth, Denki snuggled into his side, his arm looped through Shinsou’s.

“Did you really use the old going to the toilet excuse to go and win me a stuffed animal?” Denki asked, a big grin on his lips, his knee pressed against Shinsou’s.

“Just like in some cheesy American movie,” Shinsou nodded, “Are we going to kiss at the top of the wheel, too?”



“Of course we are!”

LAST QUARTER

“I’m not mad anymore,” Denki said as he chopped peppers for their dinner. He slid them across the chopping board and picked up a new piece to slice.

“Are you sure? Because you have every right to be, I’d be pissed off at me too,” Shinsou turned around from the sink with a kettle for the pasta, pouring it into the pot.

“Oh, I know that,” Denki laughed, and then sighed, picking up an olive and popping it in his mouth before carrying on, “I mean, does it hurt a little that there’s a part of your life you won’t share with me? Yeah. But you are also entitled to your own space and time to decompress, I get that. And I’m not as hurt as I was, and if and when you feel like you can share it with me, we can. Sound good?”

“Sounds absolutely perfect,” Shinsou mumbled, leaning in to give Denki a brief, fervent kiss before he carried on getting the water ready for the pasta, “You really could not have been better about this whole thing, Denki. Thank you so much for understanding, I really appreciate it so much.”

“Oh, I do not understand anything,” Denki laughed, “I’m just accepting it, you know? When it’s time, you’ll tell, you know?”

“I know, and I will. I just need to figure some stuff out first.”

“I guess that’s all I need to know for now. Do I get to ask questions about it?” Denki asked, fishing some more olives out of the jar and cutting them in halves.

“That depends on the question, I guess, but sure, fire away and I’ll answer what I can,” Shinsou leant his hip against the counter, watching the pot as it boiled and Denki as he chopped ingredients for the sauce.

“Okay, so do you go anywhere?” he asked, tossing some thyme into the pan with some sausage.

“Nope, I stay here. Sometimes I’ll go to my parents, but not very often,” Denki nodded and carried on chopping.

“It’s always once a month?”





“Mm, once in a blue moon it will happen twice,” Shinsou said, trying not to smile at the little joke he had made, because he somehow doubted Denki would be very interested in his lunar puns just then.

“Once in a blue moon, har har har, Hitoshi,” Denki quipped, but there was a lightness in his eyes above the scolding tongue that made him feel like maybe he hadn’t completely ruined everything. But also the fact that Denki understood his lunar puns was proof enough to Shinsou that he was going to need to put a ring on this man’s finger one day.

There was a long pause and Denki pursed his lips before saying, very softly, “You’re not cheating on me, are you?”

“Kaminari Denki, I’m a stupid man when it comes to love, but even I, in my profound ignorance, would have to be the dumbest fool on the face of this earth to ever do something like that to you,” Reaching out, he rested a hand on Denki’s hip, feeling his own breath making him a little dizzy before he spoke, “I’m pretty sure I’m in love with you. I’m not cheating on you. Cross my heart, hope to die.”

“Come here and give me a kiss, my hands are full of sausage,” Denki laughed, standing up on his tiptoes so Shinsou wouldn’t have to lean down so far to kiss him, “Mhh! The pasta, oh my god-” he said, pulling away and throwing the olives into the pan, “You sure did pick a time to confess, bucko.”


WANING CRESCENT

“Hitoshi! Denki!” Eri squealed, running at them full tilt and crashing headlong into their legs in her excitement. Her dress was the most lurid shade of pink imaginable and Shinsou knew without a doubt that it was a birthday gift from his father. Who had, objectively speaking, the worst taste in women’s fashion.

“Eri!” Denki said, scooping her up and sitting her on his hip, admiring the ruffles she was cloaked in, “Wow, you look so pretty today! All dressed up for your party!” He bounced her a little and she giggled.

“Dad picked this out for me, it’s bright!” she laughed, pulling a sticker from the depths of the ruffles and pressing it onto his cheek, “But it has pockets!”

Shinsou laughed, as she smoothed the golden star out over Denki’s cheekbone, and pulled out a green flower for him, leaning in so that she could stick it to his face, “Let it not be said that my dad doesn’t know what women want.”



Denki snorted and let Eri wriggle free so that she could run off and rejoin her party. Shinsou's Papa, who had been right behind her, leant in and gave both of them a hug at the same time, squeezing them in close.

"Welcome, welcome! I only let her get in first because it's her birthday. Come in! You must be Kaminari! My, but you're handsome! I guess some of my good taste rubbed off on him after all," He laughed, leaning in to kiss them both on the cheek and drag them inside.

Shinsou had been a little bit nervous of Denki meeting his Papa for the first time. He'd met his Dad already, and that had gone without any of the hitches that he had spent at least a week imagining into a very elaborate paranoid fantasy.

He'd spent at least two weeks on this particular paranoid fantasy, and it was crumbling around him as Denki admired his Papa's outfit.

"I wish he'd inherited your fashion taste, I can never get him to wear anything that isn't grey! This is lovely! Where did you get it? And please, you can call me Denki, sir, it's a pleasure to finally meet you."

"Denki! The pleasure is all mine! You can call me Hizashi! Come inside, I'll get you some orange juice. Now, Hitoshi tells me that you speak English? Amazing! I'm an English teacher you know. And that too! Wow, my boy has been bragging hasn't he? Haha! Hitoshi~ Come catch up, I made Jelly-boats, come get some before the children eat them all!"




Shinsou stood in the shade of the back garden, watching as children ran around in circles with Eri at the lead. She was having a tonne of fun in her ridiculously pink outfit, with frosting and chocolate smeared across her cheek. Her pale hair streaming out behind her as she ran, pink bow hair clips that matched her dress bouncing in her wake.

"Finish that before you get jelly all over your fingers," his dad said, walking up to stand beside him in the cool.

Aizawa Shouta looked like a werewolf. Or how someone might imagine a werewolf to look. Shaggy and perpetually tired from running around all night. The circles under his red rimmed eyes always looked deepest just before and after the full moon.

It was Aizawa adopting him that had saved Shinsou from going mad in foster care and he couldn't love his new father any more than he already did.



Popping the last of the jelly boat into his mouth, he set the empty orange peel on the tray full of party debris on the table beside him. Empty and half eaten cupcake papers and candy wrappers littered the tray. At least two cupcakes that had fallen victim to one child who just licked the icing off the top.

“So, what do you think?” Shinsou asked at last, looking across the lawn to where Hizashi and Denki were neck deep in an English conversation. They looked like they could go on for hours, and Hitoshi couldn’t help thinking of all the wonderful family time they could spend together with Denki and Papa chatting like old friends in another language and Eri tugging at their sleeves until they taught her English on their knees.

“I think you’ve got it bad. And you still haven’t told him?” Aizawa asked, picking up one of the last few chocolate frosted cupcakes that Hizashi had so lovingly baked this morning.

“How am I supposed to tell him? How am I supposed to tell anybody that I turn into an honest to goodness wolf on the full moon. It just defies any logic.” Shinsou ran a hand through his hair, making a face when he realised that there was jelly still on his fingers.

“Love doesn’t make logical sense, Hitoshi. Otherwise I would never have married your Papa, if I was going to let logic dictate how I felt.”

“Yeah, but you didn’t even have to tell him. He found you in wolf form and you turned back into a person, he always knew,” Hitoshi sighed, looking longingly out over the lawn to where their beaus were talking, “Telling him I love him seems so easy by comparison.”

“And do you love him?”

“God, do I. More than coffee,” Shinsou sighed and his father quirked a brow.

“If you can’t tell him what you are, telling him you love him won’t be enough. You don’t meet a boy like that every day, Hitoshi. Let him know how much you love him, or you’re going to end up losing him.”

Across from them, Eri was tugging at Denki’s sleeve, and he picked her up, settling her on his hip just like he had earlier. Laughing, she poked the sticker on his cheek and tipped her head back to howl.

“And sooner or later,” Aizawa said as they watched Eri giggling in Denki’s arms, “He’s going to ask some questions.”



NEW MOON

“When you said you wanted to go for a walk,” Denki panted, his hand resting on his knee, “I thought you meant in a park.”

“This is a park,” Shinsou said in some confusion, turning to look at his boyfriend, who was bent over and gasping for breath, though they were only halfway up what could be at best described as a hill.

“Yeah, a *national* park,” Denki moaned, forcing himself to stand up straight. His cheeks were red and sweat was glistening on his forehead like a tiara that had slipped. He looked beautiful. Even if he was wearing his usual ripped jeans and a band t shirt and his converse were stained red with the dust from the trail that they were walking on. He still looked every inch the angel in the coffee shop that he had been when they met, “Babe, what are you looking at?”

“You.”

“What?”

“The view,” Shinsou corrected, knowing damn well that Denki had heard him the first time, giving him a big, lazy grin, “Come on, we’re almost at the top and then it’s going to be beautiful when the sun sets.”


“Ohhh my God, we’re not even at the top yet,” Denki moaned, his head tipping back. “Hitoshiiii, if you wanted to murder me, couldn’t you drive us there?”

“And miss out on these scenery? No way,” he teased, waiting until Denki had staggered his way over to him before putting his arm around his waist and walking with him slowly, step in line with step. “Besides, you’re not the one carrying the backpack.”

“Ugh, go away, you mountain man, when you said you liked the outdoors I just thought you meant it was pretty,” There was no letting up in Hitoshi’s grin as he leant over to kiss Denki’s sweaty forehead.

“Nope, I like hiking far and away from cities. Which this isn’t, by the way, you can still see the city through those trees over there. We’re not too far from civilisation, don’t you worry. I just like how quiet it is, and how fresh the air is. When you can’t hear a car for miles around and there’s nothing but peace. It’s hard to find that in the city sometimes. Sometimes I just need quiet.”

A look of sadness crossed Denki’s face and he looked at the ground as they walked on a few paces, “Yeah, I know you do.”



“You know, maybe in a few months, you could spend that time with me? If you wanted. I know you’re going up to your parents this month so I don’t want to shake your plans. But when you’re free...? I’d like to spend that time with you.”

They’d reached the top of the hill and Denki held up a hand while he breathed deeply through his nose, trying to get his breathing back to normal so that he didn’t sound both super emotional and completely out of breath when he spoke.

“Yeah! I’d love to!” he said at last, wiping his hands off on his jeans before reaching up to take Shinsou’s face in his hands and kiss him, “Obviously, you enormous dork, I’d love to!” He laughed, pulling Shinsou over to a pretty, shaded spot under a tree so that they could spread out the picnic blanket and relax before they ate.

As they were unpacking, Denki’s hands paused on the bright paper wrappings of fast food. “Hitoshi? You didn’t forget that it was date night tonight, did you?” he asked, trying really hard to sound like he was scolding more than laughing and failing miserably. “I- I might have?” Shinsou said, feigning a wince.

Denki laughed, flopping down onto the blanket and looking up at his boyfriend, arms outstretched and hands grabbing for him, “Come here, lover boy, give me a kiss.”

He’d just touched his lips to Denki’s when he pulled back and swore under his breath. Shinsou looked at him, puzzled, “What is it, Kitten? Are you sitting on a rock?”


“What? No, no, I’ve just realised we have to walk all the way back down that hill in the dark. I’m gonna die. You really did bring me up here to murder me,” Denki huffed, but allowed himself to be kissed anyway.

“I’ll tell you what, I’ll carry you back down the hill so you don’t trip and hurt yourself,” Shinsou soothed, stroking his cheek, still a raspberry ripple of pink and pale from all his exertion. “You’re going to put your back out and break a leg,” he chided, but didn’t seem to object too much to the idea, “So strong, you’re my hero.”

“Uh-huh? Which one?”

“Oh, Henry Cavill, for sure,” Denki nodded, answering quickly, like he thought about it seriously before, “No one else in Hollywood has your vocal depth, and if they’re going to white wash us they better get that right at least.”

Shinsou laughed, “Right, I’m not exactly sure I’m Superman material.”



“Oh, but you are.”

WAXING CRESCENT

“Silvery mooooon,” Shinsou crooned as they pulled up to their parking spot in the open air theatre, not trying to keep the timbre of a howl out of his voice. It was an oddly freeing decision to let Denki see him when he was in his wolf form. And though it wasn’t going to happen immediately, it was a step that he had put into motion that he couldn’t take back.

“Now this is a proper picnic,” Denki said, picking up the basket that they had packed together and making a strained noise, “Woof, Toshi did you add a few bowling balls when I wasn’t looking?”

“Here Kitten,” he laughed, reaching out and taking the basket easily, though Denki wasn’t wrong, it should have been pretty heavy, “Let me take it,” he murmured, stealing a soft kiss before pulling back with his signature lazy grin.

“Where are you keeping all that muscle? I swear you’re just skin and bone, I’ve seen you without a shirt.


“You know,” he said lightly, trying to ignore the drumroll in his chest, “I’m actually a werewolf and I have superhuman strength and reflexes.”

Denki laughed, “That’s funny you know, Eri actually said something like that to me at her birthday party. What was it? I want to remember exactly. She said, ‘Do you love Hitoshi even though he’s a wolf?’ I said yes, obviously, and she was like, ‘Good, because we’re all wolves, me and dad and Hitoshi.’ Is it like a family joke thing?”

“It’s- I wouldn’t call it a joke?” he could hear his own voice sounding hoarse as they walked through the dark towards where the stage was set up, through the dark and twisted trees, “More of a, a family thing. You know. How people have things?”

“Oh my God, are you scared I’ll stop loving you because your little sister called you a werewolf?”

“But I am a werewolf,” his mouth felt dry as Denki wove their arms together, leaning into him as Shinsou lead the way to their seats so that they could watch the play in the clearing of the trees. Above them, the moon shone brightly, almost full and bathing the stage with its silvery light.



“Uh huh, and that’s why you’re so strong, right?” Denki asked, nodding up at the pale disc in the sky, “All the moon juice is getting to you.” He pecked Shinsou on the cheek, “Let’s eat, I’m starving, and we only have an hour before the play starts.”

FIRST QUARTER MOON

“This is so exciting,” Denki said, setting his bag down on the end of Shinsou’s bed, “It feels like my first sleepover!” He grinned, moving over to the Kotetsu to stick his feet under it and warm them up after the chill of outside.

“A little I guess,” Shinsou said, his heart pounding against his ribs like it was trying to escape.

“Hey,” Denki moved closer, resting his hands on his chest, rubbing slowly, “It’s okay that you’re nervous. You’re letting me into your space, that’s a big thing you know. I know I’m kinda goofing off, but this is a big thing for me, too. This is important for me. But if you’re not ready then I can always go home, okay? You can say that.”

“I know, I know, it is a big thing, that’s,” he let out a long breath. His sense of smell was getting better and the delicious whiffs of Denki that were often still in his apartment on the day of the change were strong and it was as relaxing as it was invigorating, “That’s kind of just it, this is big, and I don’t want you to freak out on me.”

“Freak out? What, do you turn into Mr Hyde?” Denki snorted.

“Kitten, this is serious,” Shinsou said softly, leading them back to the Kotetsu where they could talk in comfort, “I’m nervous about this. It’s a side of me you haven’t really seen before and I don’t- I don’t want it to chase you away from me. I’m not dangerous.”

Denki blinked, the jesting slowly fading from his expression as he spoke. Because that didn’t sound like regular old freaked out. That sounded like Shinsou was about to confess to the kind of crimes that landed people their own Netflix adaptation.

“Okay, let’s start small then. Hitoshi, you’re kind of freaking me out here. Which I know you don’t wanna do, so let’s just, talk through it, okay? Why are you scared?” Denki set his hands on the table, letting the warmth of it comfort him as he tried to process what was happening.

“I’m scared that you’ll be afraid of me. And leave me. If you find out. But I need to tell you, I can’t keep hiding it from you any longer,” The words came out in bursts, like each thought was a jet of water out of a hose.



“Why would I be scared of you, Toshi? Have you ever done anything for me to be afraid of?”

“I- well. No? Not really?” He’d barked at the neighbours a lot when he was a teenager, but that was just a rebellious phase, it hadn’t stuck, “But I might be frightening to you without meaning to be.”

“Okay,” Denki said, slow and calm, and feeling a lot more like Hitoshi was panicking over nothing, “And why is that?”

“Because I’m a werewolf.”

Denki gaped, before laughing, “Shinsou Hitoshi, I thought you were being serious-”

“No, no, Denki, I am. Dead serious, like, cross my heart, on Eri’s life, serious.”

That gave the blond pause and he looked at Shinsou, unsure what was going on and not entirely sure about finding out.

“You’re a werewolf?”


“Yes! Full moons change me, that’s why I hide away during them, I can’t be seen walking around on four feet. So I lock myself in my apartment or I go to my parents and my Papa will take the three of us on walks.”

“The three of you?” Denki whispered faintly.

“Yes, the three of us. Eri, Dad and me. We’re all werewolves. And Papa, he’s a normal human who found my dad going through a bin outside his radio show one night when it was still a late night slot and he took him home and poof he turned into my dad again,” Shinsou’s hands were shaking and he pressed them into the table to try and calm the tremours down just a little.

“Hitoshi, this is weird,” Denki said at last, his brow furrowed and his lips pressed together, “This isn’t normal. You know that, right?”

“Oh, I am *extremely* well aware of that. Why do you think it took me so long to tell you? Do you think I don’t know how insane I sound right now?” he ran a hand through his hair, letting out a deep sigh. “You know that conversation you had with Eri? On her birthday, where she told you I was a wolf? And then when we went to the theatre last month and... You seemed so okay with it. And I want to share this part of my life with you. I want to share every part of



my life with you. You know me, please can you, I don't know. Humour me? Just let me try to prove it to you."

Denki pressed his lips together, his brain whirring to try and figure out how exactly this could still be a joke. Maybe Shinsou had gotten them a puppy and he was just trying to-?

But Denki had long ago figured out that Shinsou was always absent on the full moon. Mina had even jokingly suggested that he was a wolf man. Denki had privately thought that Shinsou was into some more esoteric wiccan practises, even though everything about him screamed otherwise. Maybe it had just been wishful thinking.

Maybe he needed medication? Or professional help?

He loved him. That went without question. Even if they did need to get him some help.

Letting out a deep sigh, he reached out a hand to hold Hitoshi's.
"Okay."

FULL MOON

"Hitoshi," Denki said, reaching down to scratch behind two perky black ears and looking down to see two shiny lavender eyes peering up at him. "You need to move or I won't be able to make you anything for dinner."

A low sound of dissent sounded from the wolf that had his head in his lap, and Shinsou shuffled forward a little bit so that more of him was in Denki's lap, and he snuggled down a little.

"Toshi, I'm hungry," he tried again, leaning down to press a kiss to the top of his furry head. And then his nose.

Hitoshi whined reluctantly but slid off his lap anyway, stretching and lying down on the floor.

"Thank you," Denki smiled, pausing to scratch his ears again before heading to the kitchen to start on dinner for himself and his, currently quadrupedal, boyfriend.





VIDEO GAME MARYAMMONSTER

The situation Hitoshi walked into while entering Kaminari's room was, well...

"Fellas, is it gay if I put my bed next to Sero's? Like it saves space but he's also my homie. I'd put it next to Kiri, but Bakubro would kill me, and Mina and I ain't hetero like that."

"Mina, put a bed down I'm begging you."

"The phantoms aren't that bad, honey."

"Tell that to Sero, who died while harvesting the fucking sugarcane farm!"

"Ok it isn't that bad, he got all his stuff back!"

"Mina, I swear to fuck if you don't put down a bed to sleep I will kill Edgar and use his leather to make a book just to say 'Fuck you'"

"Denki, baby, if you lay a single hand on that cow I will slaughter Stinky when I come home."

"That dog belongs to the squad, not just me!"

"Then why does he always follow *you* into the mine?"

"That's irrelevant! If you kill that dog I'll kill Bonk!"


"If this mule dies I'll come to your room in real life and beat you up."

...frantic to say the least. He coughed to make his presence known, causing Kaminari to look up from his laptop and finally notice his guest. He peeked up immediately, "Shinsou!"

More yelling came from the speakers on the laptop:

"Hi, Shinsou!"

"Wait, why's Shinsou there?"



“Kami, are you leaving us for your boy toy?”

“Shut up you assholes,” a frazzled Kaminari hissed towards the computer, hitting some buttons and making the voices noticeably quieter, “So, Shinsou! What brings you here?”

This confused the taller boy. “We were going to study tonight?”

Kaminari seemed to work some things out in his head for a moment. He picked up his phone from beside him and checked it, smacking himself on the forehead. “Today’s the 20th? Damn, I didn’t think it was on a Monday, it’s a Bakusquad game night, and Mondays are for Minecraft.”

“You can finish what you’re doing if you want?”

“Wait, really? ‘Toshi you’re the best!” Kaminari got up from his desk chair and jumped to hug his friend, who stumbled under the sudden weight. Kami released him and plopped back into his seat.

Hitoshi took the opportunity to sit on the bed. “As long as it doesn’t take longer than a half hour, I suppose.”

“I totally promise it’ll be shorter than that! I just have to get back to the surface, put the lapis and redstone away, and give Sero the melon seed I found.”

“...What?”

Kaminari froze in his seat, then slowly spun around to face Hitoshi head on. There was a scared look on his face that Hitoshi had never seen before. Before he got the chance to question it, Kaminari spoke back up again in the most serious voice he could muster. “Shinsou, have you never played Minecraft?”

“Um,” Kaminari looked mortified as Hitoshi paused, “No?”

Kami was dead silent, staring at Hitoshi, all while muffled yells could be heard both through the speakers of the computer, as well as through the walls of the dorms. He’d heard of the game before, but he never had anything to play it on. It’s not like he could have afforded it anyways.

“Sorry?” he offered, but could barely get it out before Kaminari was up and placing his hands on the other’s shoulders.



“Don’t you dare apologize, my sweet, sweet sheltered boy. Tell me, do you at least know what the game is?”

Hitoshi nodded.

“Thank the lord. We can put off studying for tonight, I have to teach you something else.”

“We shouldn’t really put off studying.”

“You can study whenever! Minecraft is forever.”

There’s no use arguing with something you don’t understand. Just as Shinsou was about to sit back down on the bed, Kaminari dragged over the small table from the middle of the room, ushering for the other boy to sit on it next to the desk. Hitoshi shrugged, sat, and waited. After hitting some buttons, the voices came back in full force. He’d known it was the Bakusquad, but now he could make out more of what they were saying.

“I’m back!” Kaminari said, excitedly, “I’m gonna give Shinsou a tour of the server!”

“Oh my gosh!” That was Mina, “Hiiiiiii! Denki, tell him I said hi!”

“He can hear you, Mina.” Sero butted in. “Dude, she still hasn’t put a bed down and I’m getting eaten alive out here!” Shinsou noticed a death notification for “Stickyboi420” come up on the bottom of the screen. “Fuck!”

“Mina, be nice!” Oh, it sounded like Kirishima was playing too. He hadn’t heard him when he came in before. “I gave you a bed before you went out! Just put it down so we can reset the sleep counter.”

She groaned, “Ugh! Fine.”

Kirishima spoke up again, “By the way, Bakugou is joining in, said something about how ‘hair-for-brains isn’t getting a tour unless I’m there,’ so get ready.”

A sound notified the group that Bakugou had joined the chat, and a few moments later “xXx_KingXplosionMurder_xXx” entered the server. Everyone was silent. Well, almost everyone.

“Fuck!”

Wait, that wasn’t Bakugou, that was Sero-



“Where the fuck is Blasty?”

Oh. There he was.

“Sorry!” Kirishima spoke up, “I got hit fighting the phantoms, so he spawned on me to try and help!”

Kaminari leaned over to whisper in Hitoshi’s ear, “When Bakubro entered the server for the first time, he found diamonds in fifteen minutes, and now he won’t share if we ask. He made himself and Kiri diamond armor and swords, and enchanted them all,” he pouted and crossed his arms in a huff, “But I ask for a diamond pickaxe one time...”

“We can hear you, Dunce Face.”

Kami froze in place.

“And after I said no, you tried to steal some instead, so no diamonds for you. String bean, you get inside, Ei, hold them off but try not to kill them. We could use the membranes, so I’m coming over with the looting sword.”

Shinsou was understanding about fifty percent of the words being spoken.

A high-pitched squeal interrupted the group, “Guys! I found pandas! They’re soooooooo cute!”

Three voices at once yelled, “Sleep!”

Bakugou sighed, “Horns-for-brains, get bamboo, we don’t have any here and Sero could use the stuff for scaffolding. While you’re at it, make a dirt shelter and place a fucking bed.”


Sero spoke up again, “Mina how far away are you?”

“Uhhhhh,” she paused, “It looks like I’m about 1,000 positive X, and 500 negative Z away from you guys.”

“That’s not too far, can you lure some pandas back? I wanna add them to the ranch.”

Bakugou interrupted, “Look at the faces, they have five or six variations and that affects the way they act. Get a variety so plain-face can have some fun.”

“Awww!” Mina cooed, “Someone cares about us!”



“Shut up! Just do it!”

Hitoshi learned a lot that afternoon. Not a single bit of it was related to their studies. As it turns out, the Bakusquad had a pretty organized system in place. Denki was the designated miner. He loved the feeling of success he got when he'd find a resource, but was terrified of the mobs hidden in caves. Because of this dilemma, his mines were less of a strip and more of a maze. They twisted and turned, sometimes running into themselves, but not a single indicator to lead him back to the top. He got lost often. Kirishima was the fighter of the group. With the enchanted armor and weapons from Bakugou, he traversed the surface world, slaying monsters by night and collecting special materials requested from the others by day. Whenever possible, he'd collect the obscure items villagers wanted, saying it made him feel like a knight in a medieval village. Mina explored. She rode her mule, specially bred to be faster than average, and filled out maps of the lands surrounding the base. When she was out, she was searching for new biomes and structures. She took refuge in villages when needed, but barely slept. Sero was her complete opposite. He was the homemaker. Not only did he build the houses (from tutorials, he'd proudly admit), he'd build expansions so frequently, the base looked more like a town. His pride and joy was his farm. He had almost every type of crop and animal, even if they didn't produce anything. He cooked and crafted recipes, bred animals, and sorted chests into a neat system.


Then there was Bakugou. Rarely online, but the highest level in the server. Constantly fighting and mining, but the least deaths out of all of them. He came on to help clean up, basically, even though he'd never admit it. While online he'd clean up Sero's farm, fix whatever armor or weapon Kirishima had broken, clean up Kaminari's strip mines and place torches so he wouldn't get scared of the mobs, and guide Mina back to the base to show off all her loot.

The thing that caught Shinsou's interest the most was a meow from the corner of the house Kami was showing off. He explained to him that Sero was the first to find a village, and had found cats to tame. The one in his house was a white cat with two different colored eyes named Todoroki.

“He went and told Todoroki about it before class the other day,” he was explaining, “And the dude totally laughed! It was like seeing a unicorn! I've been trying to get the guy to laugh for weeks and Sero does it his first try!”

Sero butted in, “The man's an enigma, I swear. You show him a meme and he gets confused, but today Midoriya made a shitty pun and my man burst out laughing! I really don't get it.”

Hitoshi stared at Kaminari as the latter giggled and kept talking, but he wasn't paying much attention anymore. It had been an hour, and studying was long since a forgotten idea. All he



could think about now was how adorable the blonde looked when he was laughing like that. He had it bad. After the joint training he'd been seeing more and more of this guy, and more and more did he start to grow on Hitoshi. Now, being in the same class, it was inevitable. He caught feelings, the opposite of what he said he'd do. He didn't just want friends now, he wanted a boyfriend. Denki was going to be the death of him, with his little touches and flirtatious remarks. Said boy was looking at him with a strange look on his face, and made Shinsou snap out of his trance.

"Huh?" he said, a small blush forming on his cheeks from being caught staring.

Kami grinned, "I asked if you wanted me to help you build a house!"

"A house? I don't even have the game."

"You really spaced out didn't you? I got Bakugou to agree to get you a copy!" he leaned down to whisper in Hitoshi's ear, "The dude's like, low-key loaded."

"Oh, well I'll have to thank him, I suppose."


"I can have Sero help us! He finds the best tutorials for the coolest buildings, he's like, super efficient. I'll have him find an extra big one for the both of us!"

"The both of us?" Hitoshi gaped at him.

"Yeah! I hope that's ok! Sero asked me to move out 'cause he's running out of space in his house and I'll need a space to live and-" Kami rambled on, but Hitoshi had spaced out again. He was going to be living in a home with his crush, who spoke of it like it was no big deal. Was it weird to think that sharing a home in a video game might mean something?



Hitoshi was exhausted. Lack of sleep had taken its time catching up to him lately, and now he was crashing. But Denki wanted to hang out tonight. He'd told him that he was going to pass out any minute, so he asked if Shinsou would be fine just watching him play a game while they chatted. To anyone else, the idea may seem strange, but the pair had been doing it more and more lately. Yeah, Shinsou played Minecraft with him every once in a while, but he still enjoyed sitting next to the blonde and watching some game he knew nothing about. It was comfortable. Kami got to ramble on and on, which actually helped him focus, and Hitoshi loved to listen and sometimes ask questions. Mutually beneficial.



It was late, so Hitoshi texted Kaminari that he was outside his door. He waited a minute for a response but nothing ever came. It was uncharacteristic of Kami not to immediately text back, so Hitoshi decided to take things into his own hands. After a light knock also revealed nothing, he went for it. Turning the door handle revealed it was unlocked, so he gently cracked it open. “Kami?”

No response. He opened the door wider to reveal, well, nothing much. Kaminari was sitting against his bed on the floor, his computer having been moved from his desk to his low table, and a controller in his hand. He was hunched forwards, brows furrowed and mouth slightly ajar. Hitoshi opened the door wider and stepped in, causing his friend to suddenly look up and jump in his seat.

“Holy shit! Don’t you know how to knock?”

Hitoshi looked confused, “I texted and knocked, but you didn’t answer.”

“Oh! Sorry! I got really into the match I was in and... well... you know how I get.”

The tired boy started walking over. “Yeah I get it, now scoot.”

Kami made space beside him and patted the ground. Before Shinsou could even think to ask, the electric blonde pulled the blanket from his bed and shoved it at him, “In case you pass out!” Hitoshi rolled with it and made himself comfortable, patiently waiting for the other to start his explanation of the game he was currently extremely focused on.


“So,” he started, “Usually I’m playing with the guys, but tonight they all went to bed early for the English test tomorrow.”

“And you didn’t because you’re flue-”

“Because I’m fluent!” Denki finished for him, “So they’re all like ‘You really should sleep well the night before a big test’ and I’m all like ‘I’ll ace it anyways!’ cause I totally will. So they all went to bed and I’m just here binging mystery heroes so I can get those anniversary loot boxes.”

“Well, I was following you up until the end there.”

“Oh right!” Kami smacked himself on the forehead, “The game! I’m playing Overwatch. You may have heard of it a few years ago, but the hype train settled down a bunch by now.”



Basically, we all pick different heroes with super epic quirks and weapons, and fight to either capture an objective, hold a point, or push a payload.”

“Heroes?” Hitoshi mumbled in response, leaning against the bed behind him.

“Yeah! There’s like a bunch, I haven’t counted in a while. So, you know how in a lot of first person shooter games, the army guys are quirkless so they’re on a level playing field with each other, but in this game, they work off each other’s quirks! Most of them have cool amazing quirks, but some of them are quirkless! Like, Soldier 76 is like the generic soldier and doesn’t have any special power, and Junkrat just likes explosives! Some of them don’t even use their quirks, just their weapons! Roadhog has a quirk we don’t know about, but it makes him have to wear a gas mask just to breathe, the lore told us that a while ago.”

“The lore?”

“Yeah!” The game loaded in, catching Kami’s attention for a moment as he made his character wave at some others, “It’s got a whole timeline about this war between humans and sentient robots that rebelled! The organization is the title of the game! It’s pretty cool.”


Hitoshi hummed, letting him know he was listening as he watched what seemed like chaos happen on the screen in front of him. Listening to Denki talk was relaxing. Sure, Hitoshi could talk anyone’s ear off in the best of times, but for moments like these, when he could barely even think, just letting go and letting someone else handle the conversation was pretty damn swell. Kami had stopped talking, which usually meant he was focusing elsewhere. Talking kept his attention and let his hands do the busy work so he could efficiently finish a task.

“Kami, tell me about the heroes.”

He perked back up from where he’d started to slouch over, seemingly coming out of whatever thought he’d been trapped in, and smiled wide, “Dude that’s such a good idea! I’ll tell you about the ones I spawn as! In mystery heroes, you come back as a different hero each time you respawn.”

“Sounds like a plan.”

“Cool, so right now I’m Zarya, so this won’t last too long, but she has this strength quirk! But without her quirk she’s also just the world’s strongest woman! She’s just this really badass Russian lady and Kirishima likes to main her so he can shield us from afar. I’m just bad at timing and can’t use her to her full potential. But Kirishima really just mains tanks that remind him of himself, like Reinhardt.”



“Mhm. Oh, you just died there.”

“Yeah, the Reaper flanked me, which means he came from some other direction and got us where we weren’t expecting it. Reaper is actually Bakubro’s main.”

Shinsou watched the killcam, “Seems like a good pair, they’re both angry bitches that’ll kill you.”

Denki snickered, “Yeah, and the shotguns totally mirror his real fighting style, so he’s already good at it. You’d think he’d be this other guy, Junkrat, cause he has explosives, but Bakugou just called him annoying and weak and left it at that.”

Shinsou started to lean against the other boy, “I don’t know, seems like a good match.”

“Aw, that’s just mean, Tosh! But, well, it’s not wrong.”

Smiling to himself, he leaned into Denki more and listened. This next one was Tokoyami’s main, who sometimes played with the group to fill out the roster. He was an archer who had a spirit dragon quirk, similar to Dark Shadow, and his brother had the same. Tokoyami mained the two, but liked to snipe more so he could take more time analyzing situations and helping direct people around. Kami didn’t last too long on that one.

“Ugh!” he sighed, watching the killcam as another sniper shot him down, “When am I gonna get a good hero? It’s just giving me the ones I’m shit at.” he pouted and leaned back on Hitoshi.

“You’ve literally had two characters so far.”

“Yeah! But they’ve both been- *oh my god shut up shut the fuck up I’m literally monkey.*”

“Kami, no offense but what the fuck?”

“Shinsou! I’m monkey! Look!” He made his character emote, revealing a gorilla holding a rather large gun.

“You’re a gorilla?”

“I’m not!”



“Ahhh, I see.”

“You don’t get it! I’m totally gonna get us to win now! I promise if I don’t win, I do your English homework for like, a week.”

“Do you really wanna start betting right now?”

“Absolutely! Winston uses electricity like I do! Sure, he may not be able to focus it like I can, but he can shield his bros and doesn’t hurt them on accident! He’s like a better version of me!”

That caught Shinsou off guard, “Denki, don’t start with that, we’ve talked about this...”

“I know, I know, I’m sorry, but I’m just excited right now and can’t filter myself. He’s one of my two mains! And the only reason I main Baptiste is because he’s a healer and I’m really gay for him! Well, bi, I guess. He’s just really pretty.”

Kaminari had never mentioned he was bi before. Kaminari Denki, Shinsou’s big gay crush, liked guys. So Shinsou, as expected, was internally freaking out. Externally, however...

“Wow, you’ll have to show him to me.”

“Yeah! I’ll go through the hero gallery after I win here! I’ll show you Mina’s and Sero’s mains too! Mina likes D.va and Lucio, cause she likes peppy and cute things, and Sero mains Zenyatta because he, as he put it, vibes with him.”

“Yeah that fits. Tell me everything.”

The two spent the rest of the night idly chatting, Denki explaining the game and characters happily until Hitoshi fell asleep to the sound of his voice. When he woke up later, he’d find that Denki had grabbed another blanket, and cuddled up next to him. He wouldn’t tell anybody, but for the first time in a long time, he fell back asleep easily.

Kaminari had won the match, and also his heart.



Denki knew he should be asleep by now, he really did, but sometimes his quirk just left him too energized or too drained. Tonight it was the former, so here Denki was, at one in the morning, playing Mario Kart on mute in the common room. He’d be playing in his own room, but consoles cost a lot, and he wasn’t by any means loaded like some others in his class.



Just as the race ended, with him in first, of course, he felt the couch sink down next to him.

“Can’t sleep?” Shinsou asked, looking straight at the screen displaying the scores.

“Buddy, my internal battery is at, like 75% right now, and I can’t sleep until it goes down to like, 40%. So you could say that, I suppose.”

Of all the people to catch him red-handed past curfew, he was glad it was one of the few people who had no right to report him. Insomniacs stuck together. Especially if one was crushing on the other. It’s not like Denki would admit it, though. Shinsou was way out of his league. He’d probably be better suited with someone else like Midoriya, who was strong and smart, or Sero, who was chill like him. Knowing how handsome the guy was, he wouldn’t doubt he already had a secret boyfriend he was too embarrassed to introduce to Kami. Suddenly, he was pulled out of his train of thought.

“Hand me a controller.”

Kami did so happily. He knew he had to stop thinking like this. Shinsou had been helping him gain more self confidence, just as he’d been doing for him as well. Backing out to the main menu, he loaded up multiplayer races and brought up the character selection screen. He quickly picked Waluigi, ignoring the pointed look he was receiving from beside him, and waited for Hitoshi to pick his racer. Which was taking longer than usual.

“You good, man?”

“Sorry, sorry, I’m just,” Shinsou paused, “Having some troubles deciding.”

“Oh! Do you not play much? Cause if so I can load up some different game-”

“No, no. Well, yeah I suppose. I don’t play as often as you guys do. Why don’t you pick one for me?”

“Dude!” He put a hand to his heart. “I’d be so honored to pick your Mario Kart racer. I can’t believe you’d trust me with a decision like this. Here, give me your controller.”

Immediately, Denki moved the cursor and picked Shy Guy, putting his hands up when he received yet another look from Shinsou. He set the rules, picked the courses, and right as the first race was about to start, he paused the game, turning his whole body to face Hitoshi, who faced Kami back without question.



“So.”

“So?” Shinsou’s eyebrow quirked up, suspicious.

“Wanna raise the stakes?” Kami asked, grinning maniacally.

“Do I?”

“Winner of the cup can make the loser do one thing, unconditionally.”

“You didn’t do your ethics homework, did you?”

Kami put a hand to his heart again, this time gasping dramatically, “I can’t believe you’d accuse me of such a thing! To think, I’d just want to have a little competition with my dear Hitoshi, and he’d say such horrid words!”

“Ok, ok,” Hitoshi laughed, “I get it. I’m game, so let’s go.”

Denki unpaused the game, leaning forward and smirking at Shinsou, “Eat my dust, Mind-wash.”


Shinsou mirrored his position, “In your dreams, Chargebolt.”

The cup was over way too quickly for Denki’s taste, as he’d come in second to Hitoshi’s first. As they looked over the results, dread crept up the blonde’s spine, but also confusion. He decided to say what had been on his mind since the second course, “You play a lot, don’t you?”

Shinsou shrugged from where he set his controller down, “Only on weekends, but I usually let Eri pick the characters. I did beat Mic once, though.”

“M-Mic? Present Mic?” Kaminari gaped. Present Mic had come in a few times to supervise the class when Aizawa had patrol, and liked to join in more than their homeroom teacher usually did. However, when he’d come to supervise during the monthly Mario Kart tournament, he’d managed to beat the entire class. Even Bakugou, who’d held the record on all the tracks on the shared class copy. It was a massacre.

“Mhm,” Shinsou shrugged, like it was nothing. Like he didn’t hold all the power in the room. It was 1:30, and Kaminari wished he had gone to bed an hour ago. If he’d done that, he wouldn’t have to be subject to whatever his friend had in mind. What if he made Denki do something super embarrassing? Or say something really embarrassing? Did he even remem-



something super embarrassing? Or say something really embarrassing? Did he even remember the bet? He hoped he hadn't.

"You sound like Midoriya."

Denki looked up at his friend, "Huh?"

Shinsou repeated his statement, "You're muttering. You sound like Midoriya."

"Oh, I, uh, sorry... I was just, well..."

"It's fine, it was kind of cute, actually." Oh. "Now about the bet, I think I already know what I want you to do." Oh no.

Kaminari nodded, but he didn't care anymore. Shinsou had basically just called Midoriya cute. It was over. He had no chance against a guy like that. His crush liked someone else, and nothing else mattered now. It was over.


"I need you to close your eyes for me."

Kaminari did so, closing his eyes and giving up his hopes and dreams. He could already see Shinsou and Midoriya walking down the halls, holding hands. He could see them cuddling together during movie night. He waited for further instruction from Shinsou. And right as he saw them kissing before classes-

He felt a pair of lips on his. It was a quick peck, chaste and barely there, but he had noticed. And he opened his eyes just as Shinsou was pulling back, face a deep flush in the faint glow of the screen in front of them. He brought a hand up to his mouth, feeling where his crush had just been, and looked up at said crush, who was looking away with a hand on his neck.

"Shin-"

"Please call me Hitoshi." Now it was his eyes that were squeezed shut. "I know you do sometimes already, but it'll mean something else... if you'll have me, that is?"



In his state of shock, Denki took in three new facts. First, Shinsou hadn't been talking about Midoriya. Second, Shinsou had been talking about *him*. Third, Shinsou *liked him*. With this new information in mind, he brought his hand to Shinsou's face, bringing it back from where he'd turned away. Denki looked him in the eyes, smiling gently.

“Hitoshi.”

And kissed him again.





TRANQUILITY BASE MUSIC

BLUEDRAGONSTORM

Tags: fluff, quirkless AU

Summertime insomnia isn't all that bad, Hitoshi thinks. When it's school season, especially with his dad teaching, Hitoshi has a better sleep schedule and falls back on his meds if he absolutely needs to. But he doesn't want to be reliant on pills all year round and if he's being honest with himself, both he and his dad ought to cut back on the caffeine intake in the mornings during the school year.

It's kind of expected of a college student like him but Hitoshi vividly remembers being back in high school and finding his dad passed out in the teacher's lounge more often than not after classes ended, experiencing the crash after being fueled by nothing but coffee for about ten hours.

The gym teacher, a thin but surprisingly strong man named Yagi, had given Hitoshi's dad a yellow sleeping bag as a joke one year. But the tired man unironically appreciated it and used it often during his breaks at school.

Regardless, when the summer hit, Hitoshi and Shouta just slept when and where they felt like it really. Time passed in a blur until the mad rush at the end of summer when they needed to prepare for the oncoming year properly. But summer had just started so Hitoshi had no worries. He let his insomnia do its thing and his dad didn't interfere unless he had cause to be concerned.

Mostly insomnia just meant that Hitoshi would stay up far too late, preoccupying himself with reading and video games until his brain slowed down and quieted itself enough to let him rest. Not all that atypical for a young man anyway. But sometimes it compelled him to do more moving and in recent years (with his dad's permission and his location always on for Shouta to track in case something happened) Hitoshi had taken to wandering around the streets of town.

Yuuei wasn't really a big enough place for anything scary like gangs or anything. Plus, Hitoshi had taken martial arts for years so he wouldn't be completely defenseless in the worst-case scenario. So wandering around in the early hours of the morning wasn't as dangerous as it may have sounded. And Hitoshi usually found a cat or two wandering around at the same time and made a new friend. He was careful not to bring them home though.



Not because he didn't want to—he loved cats—but because he knew his dad would happily accept any stray brought into his house and then they'd end up with a dozen cats and gain a weird reputation. Well, weirder than they already had anyway.

Shouta Aizawa was kind of the cryptid of UA High and as his son (despite being adopted) Hitoshi had been described as a younger version of Aizawa-sensei with less facial hair and more acne. Thank god for prescription acne meds or he'd still have pimples the size of Mount Fuji breaking out on his face before every test.

Hitoshi found his ruminations broken up by the sight of an interesting building he hadn't seen before. Glancing around and consulting the GPS on his phone, he gathered that he had discovered a hitherto-unseen part of the upper west side of town. The building that had caught his eye was a squat yet long brick store. A neon sign in orange and yellow proclaimed it as the “Tranquility Base Music Store.”


The bricks were painted a heavy imposing black but the graffiti surrounding the glass door was happy and bright and seemed to be a part of the place's charm that the owners hadn't wanted to remove. Slightly surprised that the sign was still glowing cheerfully at 3:47 am on a Wednesday, Hitoshi walked over to inspect it. A blue laminated sign on the door said that the place was open 24 hours, Monday through Saturday.

Huh. 24/hr record store? Seemed a little weird to Hitoshi.

Hitoshi had thought he'd gotten used to experiencing the surrealism of the world when every other sensible person was in bed. That strange liminal time before the early morning commuters and the late-night walks of shame from beds or bars. But a 24/hr record store was new. So, giving in to his curiosity, Hitoshi enters the shop. A tinkling bell announces his presence in the store and he isn't entirely shocked to see that there are no customers.

A quick glance to the counter doesn't show a clerk either but he figures they might have gone in the back or something. He shrugs to himself and idly makes his way around. The place is pretty spacious with wide aisles breaking up long rows of vinyl. At either end of each row was also a little listening station; a modern turntable with a cd player, slots for cassettes, and a pair of headphones.

In the far right corner of the room is a box that's leaking out a steady stream of guitar music. It takes a moment for Hitoshi's brain to recognize it as Santana. There's a slight popping to the sound and dull background noise that makes it clear it's from some live show. The soft but powerful tune weaves all around the store and makes the empty space feel a bit more lively.



Along the walls were wire racks filled with magazines for every music genre for what appeared to be the past nine decades or so. They sell accessories too and there's even bins of used DVDs just for fun apparently. CD racks are scattered about and Hitoshi cracks an amused (and impressed) smile at the sight of all the eight-tracks. In this day and age? Seems too old-school and obsolete for even the most counter-cultured of hipsters.

He shouldn't judge; he recognized the callback to the Arctic Monkeys album in the store's name and he knows for a fact that very same vinyl is in his own bedroom. Hypocrisy notwithstanding, Hitoshi browses the records for something he likes but doesn't have yet or maybe a gift for his father. Shouta was the one who got him into records to begin with.


He remembered how scared and shy he'd been when he was first adopted by the man. Worried that Shouta would immediately ship him back into foster care like the others had because he wasn't loveable enough. He'd tried to make himself meek and small, did his best to try and read everyone's mind and pick his actions and words accordingly to trick their minds into thinking he wasn't just some sad messed up kid from a terrible home.

Shouta had seen right through it though. That first night, Hitoshi had been suffering through nightmare after nightmare and had been terrified when Shouta opened his bedroom door to check on him. The man had just sighed and told Hitoshi to follow him, offering a large hand to hold. They moved to the living room and Shouta put on a Fleetwood Mac record and they'd just sat in silence as the sounds of Stevie Nicks rolled around them.

Hitoshi had started to nod off during *Rhiannon* and had ended up sleeping against his father's shoulder halfway through Dreams. He'd woken up later, snuggled firmly in his dad's arms on the couch, a blanket draped over them both. It was the first time he felt like an adult actually wanted to keep him. Love him, even. That feeling had only grown and cemented itself as time went on.

Dammit, now he had to get a damn Fleetwood Mac record. This store probably had one in better shape than the one at home considering how well-kept all the albums seemed to be. Softly humming *Rhiannon* to himself as the nostalgia threatens to make him tear up like a total dork, he digs through the alphabetized records to find what he's looking for. There it is, the greatest hits album from '88. Perfect.

He barely realizes that his humming has shifted into quiet singing until he hears a tenor voice abruptly yet smoothly harmonizing with his own lower dulcet tones. In a blind panic, his heart beats fast and attempts to make a wild escape out of his mouth as he turns around. The album is clutched like a lifeline to his chest as his wide eyes spot a blond leaning over the previously unoccupied counter where the register is.



The guy gives Hitoshi a cheery little wave and a jaunty wink before laughing. Hitoshi is abruptly struck by three distinct thoughts: one, the guy is painfully his type, cute and bright; two, Hitoshi probably looks like some kind of wild raccoon from another dimension with his dyed lilac hair in a fluffed frenzy around his tired and confused face; and finally, the cute boy works here and he's gonna have to interact with him in a moderately normal way to ensure that he can purchase this album.

He knows—thanks to years of being an introvert who mainly gained his friends via extra-vert-adoption (looking at you Izuku and Mei)—he's not the best when it comes to first impressions. Or conversations. Social interaction in general. He's awkward and weird and the son of a teacher who has been known to expel students so making pals his age was always...a bit of a struggle growing up.

Even now he mostly relies on his best friends to handle introductions and vouch for the fact that he's not terrible, really, and that he doesn't hate everyone despite his resting face suggesting otherwise. And yet here he is, faced with a handsome blond twink with a cute streak of black in his hair that looks vaguely like a lightning bolt, in this strange threshold between the real world and the world of dreams.

"You got a nice voice there, handsome," Blondie says with a smile, "and I should know. I was born and raised in this store by a radio star."

This whole thing is absolutely surreal. And rather than do something sensible, Hitoshi finds himself opening his mouth to crack a joke that most people his age wouldn't even get. "I thought video killed them all."

Seriously, Hitoshi? Gonna lead with that reference? Seriously?

Surprisingly, Blondie just laughs and shakes his head. "Buggles, nice. And no, not all of them. Dad's still going strong. Knock on wood." His hand raps at the counter and props his head in his hands, "Anyway, you got a name to match that lovely voice?"

Okay, Hitoshi is pretty sure the guy complimented him at least three times now instead of y'know, calling the police to have him arrested on the crimes of public awkwardness and hipster-ism.

Which is impressive because Hitoshi's pretty sure the latter is a felony in some prefectures. His feet carry him over to the counter before he can fully think about the consequences of flirting back with a cute blond who's most definitely using his charm to secure a purchase. Like this guy is obviously out of Hitoshi's league but he's certainly not against Blondie batting his eyelashes at him.



“Hitoshi. My name’s Hitoshi.”

“Nice to meet you, Hitoshi,” the guy says, tapping the left side of his chest.

Hitoshi’s eyes follow the movement to note the name tag there. “You’re...Jessica?” Blondie frowns and looks down.

“Ah, damn. I grabbed the wrong shirt. I keep telling Jess to put her stuff on the second hook, but she always takes mine anyway.” An eye roll, “I’m Denki. Not Jessica.”

“Okay, Not Jessica,” Hitoshi says, inwardly cringing at his terrible dad-joke response. He blames Toshinori-sensei (who he affectionately calls ‘Dad 2’ in his head even if the man hasn’t bit the bullet and asked his father out yet) cuz Shouta has a drier, acerbic sense of wit. Which normally Hitoshi finds himself emulating but apparently all good sense flees him when an attractive person is around.

Denki, sweet boy that he is, doesn’t tease or roll his eyes again at Hitoshi. Instead, he puts on a faux affronted look and puts one hand on his cocked hip. The other touches his chest like he’s a Southern Belle from an old Hollywood movie. “I’ll have you know I’d make a damn fine Jessica.”


Hitoshi thinks he already makes a damn fine Denki. Seeing a slight pink color creep across the blond’s cheeks and the tips of his ears make Hitoshi realize that he said his thoughts aloud too. Nice. Excellent. Good to know his brain-to-mouth filter is still offline.

“Well, you’re pretty fine yourself, Hitoshi, but I think you already knew that,” Denki says, hardly missing a beat. The fluidity of his flirting makes Hitoshi feel at once both flattered and jealous; he’s somewhat envious of how smooth a talker the other guy is but he also knows that kind of easy conversation pattern stems from a lot of practice.

The notion that Denki behaves like this with all his customers makes Hitoshi feel a bit insignificant—just another drop in the ocean of people who fall for this cutie—and yet he can’t stop the little stutter of hope and happiness in his chest at the thought that all of Denki’s sweet words and compliments are purposefully directed at him.

Like the maybe-we-should-get-coffee-later purpose instead of just, you know, the less enticing maybe-you-should-sign-up-for-our-club-card kind. A boy can dream.

In the hopes of keeping his high from the boost Denki gave to his ego, Hitoshi placed the album on the counter, “Better buy this before you fall for me, then.”



He punctuated his flirtatious words and flashed what he hoped was an award-winning smile. He prayed it wasn't the vaguely terrifying one he inherited from his slightly sadistic sensei father. Whether he'd effectively turned on the charm or frightened the cashier was debatable as the boy ducked his head and curtain of artfully-tousled blond hair obscured the shorter male's face.

The album was slid over to the register and deft fingers clacked over a few keys, inputting the amount tagged on the bright orange round sticker on the album's upper right corner. Seemed that even the checkout was keeping with the retro theme, then, no sign of a chip reader or a scanner to beep an acceptance of a barcode. It was kinda endearing.

"That'll be ¥2,699, Hitoshi-kun," Denki said and Hitoshi snapped out of the slight trance he was in looking at the chipped alternating black and yellow nail polish on the other boy's fingers. The album was now neatly tucked into a nondescript plastic bag. The type without any logos or greetings on the side that small privately owned-shops bought in bulk for cheap prices.

Hitoshi stuffed his hands in his pockets to withdraw the cash he needed, pulling out his phone and a can of mints and his wallet...wait, fuck, where was his wallet?


He tried to slap around his chest and legs as subtly as possible, inwardly panicking. Fuck. Shit. Fuck. He didn't have it in his shirt pocket because he didn't have a damn shirt pocket. It wasn't in the thread-worn pale green jacket he wore around his waist.

The one with the poorly sewn Bulbasaur patch on the left sleeve from his Pokémon phase back in middle school (alright yeah, he was still firmly in said phase and he shamelessly wore the jacket often despite it being too small to really fit him or even zip up properly anymore.)

No cheap faux leather was found in his pants pockets either. Front or back. Dammit. What the hell? He could have sworn he grabbed it. He always did when he left the house. He remembered seeing it on the counter and grabbing his house keys, checking his phone to see the time, petting the obnoxious fluffy cat, Maguro, who'd climbed up on the table as he left to meow for pets—

Maguro. That beautiful fatso had been sitting on the wallet. And Hitoshi hadn't bothered to move him because he didn't think he'd need money. Wasn't like there were many places open this time of day, let alone anywhere he'd want to go.

Meaning that Hitoshi didn't have his wallet. Let alone the cash inside of it. Visibly cringing and letting out a soft curse, Hitoshi placed his hand on the album and pushed the album back towards Denki.



“Ah, so, um...turns out my wallet isn’t in my pocket where it should be and it’s most definitely underneath my fat loser of a cat on the table. So I’m just gonna go ahead and dip out before I make more of a fool of myself, okay? I’ll come back tomorrow or something with cash to pay for the album if you haven’t sold it by then. Ideally whenever you’re not on shift to see my stupidity a second time.”

Hitoshi was about to make a quick exit and hopefully walk directly into a speeding vehicle of some kind—a bus, maybe a train, he’d take a damn old lady on a scooter so long as it was fast enough to cause some sort of lasting brain damage to wipe this horrid awkwardness from his mind—when a hand caught his arm.

That bumblebee pattern of black and yellow nails was wrapped just above his wrist, Denki leaning over the counter with a surprising amount of intensity and determination. It looked like the countertop was digging sort of painfully into the other guy’s stomach but the blond only let the slightest of facial twitches give away that the motion hurt. He pulled his hand back immediately and held up a hand in the universal gesture to stop.

Confused, Hitoshi stood still and the blond snagged the album and shifted down to click open the knee-high door beside the register and come over to the customer side. Denki gently but purposefully slaps the bag to Hitoshi’s chest and the taller of the two instinctively puts his hands up to hold the bag rather than let it fall as Denki’s hand moves away.


“First one’s always free for new customers.” An obvious lie, Hitoshi literally just watched the dude ring him up for it. He raises an eyebrow but Denki’s got a fairly decent poker face.

“That sounds like a terrible business model,” Hitoshi states. He attempts to put the album back into Denki’s hands or even back on the counter but the blond swiftly counters him and soon Hitoshi finds that he’s being corralled towards the front door.

“We only do it for the hot ones, so we don’t lose much,” Denki replies and Hitoshi finds his insistence on being so flirtatious despite the fact that it’s totally wasted on a guy like Hitoshi. Who was effectively charmed the moment he heard the other’s voice.

“I should really—”

“You’ll just come back and pay later. Cuz I’m sure you really *do* wanna see me again, right?” The question is apparently rhetorical because Denki has a sly, knowing smile on his face and before Hitoshi can open his mouth to make another protest, the precocious boy rises to his tip-toes and places a soft chaste kiss to Hitoshi’s cheek.



...it's only when Hitoshi's made it roughly halfway down the block that suddenly remembers that the place is open 24/hrs. It wasn't a holiday last time he checked. He glances back and sees through the glass door that the cute cashier is kneeling on the ground with a terribly red face and a hand over his heart like the protagonist of some shojo manga.

Hitoshi turns his face forward again and walks home. Although it feels more like he's gliding on fluffy white clouds pulled straight down from heaven and he's pretty sure he's gonna need to make an appointment with his dentist because the sheer force of his unstoppable smile is threatening to shatter his jaw.

His good mood infects the world, it seems, as lights begin to blink on as the city groggily wakes up around him. Even Maguro, who ought to be sleeping, weaves happily between his legs in greeting when he gets home. The cat even lets out a happy little "mmmrrrrpp" when he's picked up and cuddled to Hitoshi's sore cheeks.

And when Hitoshi catches sight of the bright yellow string of digits on the record case, just under a hastily scribbled Denki <3, well he damn near breaks his face in half with his grinning.





TAKE THREE CHAMIBII

Tags: Aged up characters, use of foul language, mentions of domestic violence

It's been said that you experience three great loves in your lifetime.

The first love is the high school sweetheart love. You date when you're young, they give you butterflies, they're more than likely your first, and you spend countless hours writing their last name with your first name.

Tetsutetsu Denki.

The second love is more wild, reckless, volatile, and passionate. Often this relationship is fraught with emotional abuse, doubts, and cheating. You'll question why you're staying, but the answer more often than not is simply, sex.


Monoma Nieto.

The third love comes in unexpectedly. This love will hold a mirror up to you and gently encourage you to examine your flaws and faults, inspiring personal growth and change. This love is more mature, has the tendency to set your world ablaze, while also keeping you safely grounded. This love shows us what can and will be in the future.

Kaminari doesn't believe that shit. Not one bit.



The silver bell over the door chimes as a customer enters the quiet bookstore. Kaminari usually greets each guest with gusto, but today, his world was horribly grey. Since the ending of his current relationship, everything has been tinted with a grainy greyness that left him feeling more fatigued than cheerful. Even his quirk didn't have the usual zest and zip. He peers over the paperback novel he's reading to watch the guests that enter the bookstore. He's the only one working right now, and usually he'd be annoyed by the overwhelming quiet, but the smell of books and the sound of silence are comforting him. He sighs and turns the page, having no recollection of what's happening in the story, despite having spent a number of minutes re-reading the same paragraph.



Customers come and go, all morphing into one grey amorphous blob. He can't be bothered to engage in small talk, can't be bothered to remember names or faces. He even forgets to hand back a bank card once or twice and when he's reminded, he struggles to sweep away the cobwebs in his mind to recall what the customer is asking for.

He didn't think breaking up with Nieto would leave him feeling so down. The relationship was anything but healthy, and honestly, he knew that. He knew it wasn't healthy to dread going home for fear of an argument. He knew it wasn't normal to be demeaned and sworn at, while in the same breath being told that he's "a good boyfriend who just has bad habits", but he still believes that Nieto took the vibrancy from his life when he ended the relationship.

He sighs and returns to his book once the last customer waiting to purchase, finishes their transaction. Eventually, he's able to lose himself in the novel, willingly placing himself in the shoes of the protagonist and working out his emotional constipation at the same slow pace as the character. When the bell rings over the door and a gust of wind causes the pages of the displaced books on the counter to rustle in the breeze, he doesn't raise his head, but just calls out, "It's about time Hanta. Your shift started almost thirty minutes ago. I'm not going to explain away your tardiness again. Not without something in return." He dabs his tongue against the pad of his forefinger and turns the page, completely engrossed in the tale at this point.

A soft chuckle, that was definitely not a sound that Hanta would ever make, causes Kaminari to reach for a scrap of paper to save his place. He sets his book down, before raising his eyes to a vibrant and dazzling man.

"I don't know who Hanta is and my sincerest apologies for his tardiness, but I'm wondering if you can help me find these textbooks." The customer extends a slip of paper and Kaminari is only capable of staring.


The customer coughs politely, and Kaminari's eyes widen. He's staring. Like an idiot.

"Textbooks?" The only word he's able to mumble.

"Textbooks." The customer replies, barely masking the amusement in his tone.

"We, uh, don't sell textbooks. I know it's confusing since we're right next to the campus, but we're a used bookstore. Sorry." Kaminari sheepishly shrugs as he apologizes.

"Ah. Well, thank you for your help." The customer flashes a dazzling smile and raps his knuckles against the counter, before turning back to the front door.



“Tolstoy!” Kaminari yells out and immediately regrets it, because the poor customer probably thinks he’s having an episode of some sort and the only reason he’d turn back around would be to administer first-aid. Kaminari can feel the heat of a blush creeping up his neck and settling on his cheeks and he wants to kick himself in the ass, but the customer turns back around and smiles again, effectively causing Kaminari to both choke and gasp at the same time.

The customer quirks an eyebrow and approaches the counter hesitantly. “What about him?”

Kaminari points to the list still on the counter. “Your textbooks are very, English majory. We do have a pretty great selection of Tolstoy books.”

The customer snorts, “English ‘majory’? Cute. Where would I find this selection?”

“I’ll show you!” Hanta replies as he comes in the front door.

Kaminari’s head whips toward his best friend and co-worker. He shakes his head no and Hanta, bless his dumb heart, smiles and nods yes.


“I don’t mind Denks! You’re reading right? And I’m super late. It’s the least I can do.” He smiles cheerfully at Kaminari and pats the customer’s shoulder, pushing him forward. “Tolstoy, you say? Follow me!”

Kaminari watches as the two men slowly fade from his view. He has to restrain himself from jumping over the counter to go after them. Luckily, the resident bookstore cat, Mouse, decides that she’s ready for pets and sidles up next to Kaminari, shooting him both an exasperated and playful look. He scratches absently behind her ears as he tries to listen to the conversation taking place a couple of aisles over. Unfortunately, he can’t hear anything other than Hanta’s loud guffaw and a polite chuckle from the customer. Mouse bats at his hand to remind him of the important task at hand – scratching her ear floof. He sighs sadly and leans over the counter, resting his forehead against Mouse’s side. “The heart dies a slow death, shedding each hope like leaves until one day there are none, Mouse.”

“Memoirs of a Geisha?” The customer places a novel on the counter and Kaminari jerks up quickly, frightening Mouse and probably making more of a fool of himself.

“Yes, how did you know?” His voice is embarrassed and small as he rings up the purchase.

“English major.”



“Right. Your total is fifteen dollars even.” Kaminari looks up and is taken aback by how beautiful the man is.

The customer counts out the exact total and takes his book with a soft, “thank you” as he departs.

Kaminari reaches for his book, but pauses, his hand hovering over the novel as he looks at a scrap of paper with sloppy handwriting.

Shinsou Hitoshi 555-3476

Kaminari stares, wide eyed and in disbelief, at the number. He thought he made a complete and total fool of himself, but apparently, Shinsou thought differently. The corners of his mouth twitch into a tight smile as he reaches for the slip of paper. However, before he can gather the piece of paper, Hanta’s hand comes crashing down on top of his and snatches the paper away. Kaminari and Hanta lock eyes and in an instant, Kaminari is vaulting over the countertop past a hissing Mouse as Hanta takes off down the aisles laughing.

“You’re not going to call him anyway Denki!” Hanta yells from behind the worn brown suede sofa.

“You don’t know that for sure!” Kaminari responds loudly as he feints right, yelling out triumphantly as Hanta is duped into moving left. Kaminari pounces on Hanta, holding onto his tall lanky frame and scrambling desperately for the number.

Neither of them heard the bell ringing over the door. Neither of them heard the polite cough. They did, however, feel the intense and slightly amused stare of Shinsou Hitoshi. They pause, Hanta’s arm raised high in the air clutching the sliver of paper with a death grip and Kaminari with his legs wrapped around Hanta’s legs, one arm around his waist, and his left hand reaching up.

Kaminari stage whispers, “Do you think if we stand very still and stay quiet, he’ll just, not notice us?”

Hanta replies, just as loudly, “It worked in that one movie about dinosaurs.”

Shinsou whispers, “That movie is not based on fact.”

Kaminari slowly slides down Hanta’s legs and sits on the floor, embarrassed. “You totally think I’m a spazz don’t you?” He hides his face in his hands.



“Aww, little buddy,” Hanta coos and pats his heads, “I don’t think you’re a spazz.”

Kaminari smacks Hanta’s hand away and angrily hisses, “Not you, you jackass. Him. Shinsou!”

Shinsou smiles shyly at Kaminari and shakes his head, “No.”

“Oh, thank gods,” Kaminari breathes out.

“I know you’re a spazz and I find it absolutely adorable and endearing. However, I only came back in because I think I left my wallet.”

Hanta huffs a loud laugh as Kaminari’s blush moves swiftly to the tips of his ears. Kaminari groans inwardly as he picks himself up from the floor to shuffle past Shinsou.

“Wait!” Kaminari turns quickly to face Shinsou. “You think it’s adorable and endearing?”

Shinsou winks as he continues moving past Kaminari to the front counter. He grabs his wallet and places it in his backpack. He waves goodbye as he exits the bookstore, the silver bell chiming in his wake.

“Dude, if I was gay, I’d totally be panicking right now. That was smooth as fuck.” Hanta claps Kaminari on the back and takes up his usual post behind the counter. “How are you not- “

The lights in the bookstore flicker rapidly and then shut off.

“There it is.” Hanta happily remarks.

.....

Denki stares at the blank text draft. He’s started and deleted a text message to Hitoshi several times. He tries again.

Denki: Hey! Sorry it’s taken me so long to text you. How are you?

Delete. Delete. Delete.

Denki: Hi Hitoshi, I hope you’re doing well. How are you today?

Delete. Delete. Delete.



Denki: You're the prettiest man I've ever seen in my life.

Denki starts to erase that message when Hanta bumps into him, causing his thumb to slip and hit 'send'.

"What did you do?!" Denki stares up at Hanta, golden eyes flashing with anger and slight humiliation.

"My bad Denks! I said excuse me, but I guess you didn't hear me." Hanta smiles sheepishly down at Denki.

"Not that! You-I- WHAT DID YOU DO?!" Denki shrieks as he pushes his phone in Hanta's face.

Hanta takes the phone out of Denki's hands and lets out a loud amused snort. "Why would you even send something like that dude?"

Denki levels an exasperated and intense expression at Hanta. "I didn't do anything. I was in the process of deleting that message but you." He glares at Hanta. "You."

"Me?" Hanta points to himself, Denki's phone still in his hand. "What did I do?"

Denki lets out a small shriek and reaches for his phone. Hanta takes a step back, holding Denki's phone just barely out of his reach. They both stare at each other, Hanta with a crooked smile on his face and Denki, breathing heavily, hands mussing his hair. The phone makes a loud chirp and Denki reaches for it again. Before he can take the phone from Hanta, Hanta has put in Denki's lock code and is reading the text message. Hanta lets out a low whistle and wiggles his eyebrows, smiling at Denki like the cat that just ate the canary.

"I can help you answer this one if you'd like as well." Hanta shoves the phone under Denki's nose, grinning.

Denki reads the message quickly. He looks up at Hanta and back at his phone. "What do I say to this?" Denki whines loudly.

Hitoshi: Funny, I was just thinking the same thing about you Denki.

Hanta starts to open his mouth, but Denki ignores him, snatching his phone away and tapping out a response quickly. When his phone dings again, his features soften, and he smiles. A small one, but the most genuine smile he's had since...Neito.



Hanta pats Denki on the shoulder and gestures towards the restock pile. “I’ll just—”

“Yeah, yeah,” Denki cuts him off, waving dismissively as he smiles at his phone. He spends a few minutes giggling quietly at a text message and pockets his phone, moving to help Hanta restock shelves.

The bell over the door chimes, alerting both Hanta and Denki to a potential customer. Denki and Hanta stare at one another and launch into rock, paper, scissors.

“Best two out of three!” Hanta squawks. “You always pick rock.”

“You always pick scissors.”

“I pick scissors because you used to pick paper.”

“Well, that’s why I pick rock now because—”

A soft laugh stops their argument mid-sentence. Denki looks over towards the counter and nearly drops the heavy book he was holding.


“Hitoshi, hi.” Denki shoves the book into Hanta’s chest and moves towards the front of the store. “I didn’t know you’d be coming in today. Can I help you with anything?” Denki fiddles with his choker as he glances up at Hitoshi.

Holy crap balls he was beautiful. Purple hair sloppily tied up in a top knot, sleepy eyes that sparkled with mirth and amusement, and a flash of dimples whenever he smiled. Which he had been doing since he walked into the store.

“I just wanted to stop by and make sure you were caffeinated.” He slides a cup of coffee across the counter, letting his hand linger against Denki’s before drawing back. “I wasn’t sure how you take your coffee, so I had them add five pumps of sweetener and heavy cream. You seem like the type to like your coffee as sweet as you are.” Hitoshi winks.

Denki blurts out, in response, “Does this count as our first date?” He chuckles nervously as he sips at the beverage, taking care to not make a face at how sweet it was.

Hitoshi clearly and confidently states, “Yes.”



Denki chokes on the coffee, spluttering as he tries to catch his breath. Hanta pops up, at the most inopportune time as per his usual, and huffs out a chuckle and a sarcastic, “Smooth move broski.”

After that day, Hitoshi began coming into the bookstore frequently. He started coming between classes, bringing Denki coffee and a pastry. After the second extremely sweet coffee, Denki let Hitoshi know he prefers tea with two sugars. Hitoshi quickly changed the order, bringing Denki jasmine tea, with two sugars, and a hint of lemon. They kept up this routine, with Hitoshi bringing Denki tea, and Denki finally splurging on a coffee machine so Hitoshi could save money (and spend the extra time waiting for his coffee to brew). Eventually, Hitoshi began to show up on the days he didn’t have class, hanging out in the bookstore, chatting with Denki and Hanta, offering to run errands for Denki or bring him lunch.

One afternoon, Denki is precariously perched on a ladder and Hitoshi is handing him books to re-order and shelf properly. They’ve fallen into a comfortable routine of light flirty banter, texting each other random memes and videos, but they’ve yet to have the conversation that Hitoshi has tried to have multiple times. Denki shuts it down, each and every time.

“Denki, I have to tell you something. I’ve been trying to tell you that I—”

Denki sighs softly and moves down a few rungs of the ladder, turning his torso to the side to make eye contact with Hitoshi. His eyes are absolutely beautiful, Denki thinks to himself. He fiddles with his choker, tugging at the lacey material, before dropping his eyes to the floor and saying softly, “I like you, a lot, but I’m not ready for a relationship. My last one...” Denki pauses and raises his eyes to meet Hitoshi’s.

Hitoshi moves closer to Denki. Denki inhales softly as the smell of Hitoshi’s cologne permeates his senses, dulling them just a bit. The back of Hitoshi’s hand brushes against Denki’s face. The heat from a rapidly growing flush colors his cheeks up to the tips of his ears. Fingers tuck a piece of blond hair behind Denki’s ear and when Hitoshi is close enough for their lips to touch, he whispers, “All that matters is I’m the last one.” He closes the gap, pressing soft lips against Denki’s.

It feels nice. Familiar.

Denki wraps his arms around Hitoshi’s neck and when he feels teeth nip gently at his bottom lip, he panics.

“Ouch. Holy crap Denki.” Hitoshi pulls back, rubbing at his lips with his index and middle finger.



“Guess the kiss was shocking?” Denki chuckles, hoping to break the tension.

Hitoshi opens his mouth, closes it, opens it again, and decides on laughing loudly instead. “Luckily for you,” he leans in and kisses Denki quickly before continuing, “I’m an English major. We’ll work on your puns.”

Denki steps down and away from the ladder, heading towards the front of the bookstore. “I’ve been told I’m quite punny.” He looks over his shoulder and wiggles his eyebrows in an overly exaggerated fashion.

Hitoshi rolls his eyes and groans as he follows behind Denki. He leans against the counter, smiling softly at the smaller man. Denki maintains eye contact for as long as he can before the butterflies in his stomach and the beating of his heart cause him to look away and distract himself with an attempt to balance the register.

“How about we go on a real date?”

Denki swallows nervously and keeps his eyes on the register, willing his hands to keep moving and not betray him by giving away his nervousness. “I-Okay.”

“Before you say no—wait.” Hitoshi straightens up and takes a step back from the counter, staring down at Denki. “Did you say ‘okay’?”

Denki looks up from the register and allows a small smile to play along the corners of his mouth. “Yeah, don’t tell me you’re already going to stand me up.”


“I wouldn’t think of it.” Hitoshi smiles a genuine smile that reaches his eyes and Denki’s heart skips a beat. “I can pick you up from your place later tonight. Let’s say, 8?”

“Okay,” Denki agrees softly.

“Okay,” Hitoshi says, just as soft, before tapping his fingers against the counter and leaning over to brush his lips against Denki’s cheek. “Text me your address. I’ll see you soon.” He turns and walks toward the door, waving over his shoulder.

Denki returns the wave and when he exits the store, Denki rests his hand on his cheek. His fingers trail along the ghost of Shinsou’s lips and he lets out a happy, content sigh.

The rest of the day goes by in a blur. Denki locks up the store and happily walks home, going over outfit choices in his mind. He’s so lost in thought, that he doesn’t notice the tall, svelte,



well-coiffed blond leaning against his apartment door.

Neito clears his throat, causing Denki to drop his keys. Denki stops, dead in his tracks, not even bothering to move for the keys that have bounced and skidded to a halt in front of Neito. When he moves to pick up the keys, Denki flinches. Neito raises an eyebrow and holds out the keys to Denki.

“What are you doing here?” Denki asks. He doesn’t reach for his keys, but instead lowers his eyes to the ground avoiding the steely and piercing gaze of his ex.

Monoma huffs a sigh that’s heavy with irritation and unlocks the apartment door, opening it for Denki. “You haven’t been returning my phone calls, Denki,” he scolds.

Denki attempts to move quickly past Monoma, while mumbling, “We’re not together anymore, so why should I?”

“Denks, don’t act like that.” Monoma reaches out for him, but before he can touch him, Denki is pulling away. Monoma’s reflexes are lightning quick and he grips Denki’s hand in his own, tightly. Denki does his best to hide the flash of pain that crosses his face. “You know you can’t stay away from me Denki.”

Denki manages to pull his hand free. He straightens up and holds his head high, stammering out, “I-I have a date. And he’s sweet and I really like him.” He moves inside his apartment and pushes his door closed.

Monoma slams his hand against the door, stopping Denki from closing it completely. He glares at Denki, his handsome face contorted by the sting of rejection and anger. “You’ll just fuck it up like you did our relationship.”

Denki’s lower lip trembles. He can feel his resolve slipping. “Th-That’s... I-I didn’t.”

Monoma chuckles softly and shoves his hands into his pockets, shrugging. “Good luck. Don’t come crawling back to me when he finds out how much of a piece of work you are, Kaminari.” He turns on his heels, leaving Denki with tears welling in his eyes.

Denki closes the door softly, his vision blurring from the unshed tears. He fishes in his pocket and pulls out his cell phone. He swipes at the tears that have gathered in the corners of his eyes and sends a quick text to Hitoshi.

Denki: Hey, I’m not feeling too well.



Hitoshi: You aren't just trying to get out of our date, are you? ;)

Denki freezes. He is, but why would Hitoshi think that?

Hitoshi: I was just kidding Denki. I'll bring you soup. Just let me know what kind you'd like.

Denki: It's contagious I think.

Hitoshi: I've already kissed you so...

Denki: I can't Hitoshi

Hitoshi: Can't or won't?

Denki: Is there a difference?

Hitoshi: I'll see you around Denki.

.....

Denki is miserable and has been since that exchange with Hitoshi. He's tried to reach out multiple times but was either ignored or given a one-word answer. So, he gave up. He was hopeful when Hitoshi came in a handful of times, but even then, their interaction was painfully awkward. Hitoshi wouldn't make eye contact and Denki had to fight back tears. He really likes Hitoshi, but Monoma's words ring clear in his mind each time he sees Hitoshi.


Hitoshi hasn't been in the store for several weeks now, but that doesn't stop Denki from expectantly looking towards the door each time the little bell chimes. Hanta watches him each time and each time he sees Denki's shoulders sag and his eyes glaze over just a bit.

"Enough man," Hanta starts, startling Denki out of his pitiful thoughts.

"What're you talking about?" Denki wearily asks.

"I see you looking towards the door each time a customer comes in, hoping it's him. Why won't you just reach out to him?"

"I've tried Hanta. Don't you think I've tried?" Denki slides his phone across the counter and scrolls through the text message thread. "The last time he replied was five days ago. I've texted him since then and he's just left me on read." Denki runs a hand through his hair, pulling it out of his eyes.



“Okay, well, why won’t you just go to him and tell him face to face? Since when have you decided giving up was an option dude?” Hanta stares at Denki, eyebrows pulled down and furrowed in an intense look of confusion.

“I haven’t given up, Hanta. I just don’t want to bother him.” Denki pockets his phone and turns his back on Hanta, pretending to busy himself with balancing the cash register.

“Listen, Denki. I’m your best friend and I love you. Please remember that as I’m saying this next thing.”

Denki pauses and turns to face Hanta. “Okay...”

“Neito really fucked you up. You went from being this vibrant, extroverted, joy to be around to a pale, withdrawn, grey storm cloud. You guys aren’t together anymore, but you’re letting him control you like you guys still are.”

Denki’s eyes narrow and he clenches his fists. “You don’t know what it was like Hanta, you weren’t there.”

“But I was. Who did you call at two in the morning when he’d toss you out of the apartment? Who did you cry to the first time he put his hands on you? Who took you to the doctor to make sure you were-“

“Fine! I get it! I’m sorry I’ve been such a burden to you Hanta.” Denki moves around the counter, shoving past Hanta to put back some of the books that have accumulated at the register.

“I’m not saying you’re a burden dude. I’m saying that whenever Hitoshi would come in, you would light up in a way I haven’t seen since before Neito. You smiled more. You laughed more. Hell, you even started doing your hair again. Don’t allow a ghost from your past to haunt your present and destroy your future. If you like Hitoshi, go after him. That’s all I’m saying.” Hanta falls quiet, waiting for Denki to respond.

Denki exhales slowly and turns to face Hanta. “I’ve never said this in the entirety of our friendship, and will probably never say this again, but you’re right Hanta.”

“I am?” Hanta asks, completely surprised.



“Yes. Now, you’re closing up today. I’m going to go take Hitoshi a cup of coffee and hopefully win him back.”

“Atta boy!” Hanta cheers. “But wait, why am I closing by myself? It’s only 2pm.”

Denki shrugs on his jacket and smiles brightly. “Because, if all goes well, we can have our date! See ya tomorrow Hanta.”

Denki hurriedly walks out of the bookstore before Hanta can object and stops at the coffee shop two businesses down. He orders a black coffee and sprinkles a bit of cinnamon on top, just like Hitoshi likes, and heads to the college campus. He walks through the quad, looking for Hitoshi. He spies a purple shock of hair and quickens his pace, happily trotting forward. However, there’s a young woman that’s animatedly speaking and gesturing with Hitoshi. She squeezes his bicep and giggles, tossing long white hair over her shoulder. Denki comes to a stop a few steps behind them, his heart thudding in his ears.

Of course, he wasn’t the only one Hitoshi would be talking to. Hitoshi is attractive, smart, and funny. He can have anyone he wants, and Denki just wasn’t it.

The girl with the white hair stops talking and stares at Denki. Hitoshi looks over his shoulder, confusion and hurt clouding his purple irises. “Denki?”

Denki holds out the lukewarm coffee. “I-I wanted to surprise you. Say I’m sorry. Maybe ask you out for dinner, but I’m such an idiot. Here.” He shoves the coffee into Hitoshi’s chest.

“Why are you an idiot?” Hitoshi takes the coffee, sipping slowly.


“You have a girlfriend.” Denki’s eyes flick toward the woman touching Hitoshi.

“I do?” Hitoshi glances at the young woman and back at Denki. His eyes widen slightly, and he laughs. “Oh, god no. This is my little sister, Eri.”

Eri smiles shyly and extends a hand to Denki. “You must be Denki. We’ve all heard so much about you.”

Denki shakes her hand gently, willing the blush that’s creeping into his cheeks to go away. However, when he glances at Hitoshi, he sees that same blush inching across his entire face.

Hitoshi clears his throat and lightly pushes Eri to the side as he walks Denki back down the steps and towards the front of the campus. “So, you wanted to apologize?”



Denki looks down at his feet and nods. “Yeah, I’m so sorry Hitoshi. Can I take you out for lunch? Or dinner? I promise I’ll explain everything and hopefully it makes sense.” The fingers gently placed underneath his chin causes Denki’s heart to race. Hitoshi tilts his face up and smiles down at him.

“Yes. There’s a restaurant I’ve been wanting to try. If you’re up to it, you can meet me there.”

Denki nods and stands on his tiptoes to place a quick kiss on Hitoshi’s cheek. “I’ll see you tonight.”

Hitoshi cups Denki’s face in his hands and kisses him softly on the lips. “See you tonight.”

Denki watches Hitoshi walk up the steps, waving one last time before turning on his heels and rushing home to get ready.

He pauses on the landing of the steps at his floor, scanning to make sure Neito wasn’t waiting for him. Once he sees that the coast is clear, he rushes inside. He showers quickly, styles his hair, and stands in front of the closet, deciding on an outfit to wear. Once he has the outfit picked out (black jeans, yellow and black flannel top, yellow Doc Martens with black laces, and a silver choker) he finishes getting ready. He checks the time and decides that, due to his nervous energy, better early than late would suffice.

He locks up the apartment and heads toward the train station. He decides to send Hanta a quick thank you text before boarding the train. The stop is a few blocks from the restaurant, so he takes his time, enjoying the scenery along the way. He arrives 15 minutes early, but finds Hitoshi nervously pacing in front of the restaurant.

“I thought you’d stand me up.” Hitoshi flashes a half smile as he rubs his hands across the back of his neck.

“It’s only 7:30pm. We said we’d meet at 7:45,” Denki points out as he moves in for a hug.

Hitoshi wraps his arms around Denki and kisses the top of his head. “You look amazing. Let’s eat.” He reaches for Denki’s hand and intertwines their fingers.

They’re seated earlier than their reservation time, which allows for conversation. Over the appetizer Denki shares a few details about his relationship with Neito. He’s just beginning to share his story when he notices Hitoshi scratching at his neck and face.

“Are you okay?” Denki places his fork down and stares at Hitoshi. Little red splotches begin to



form on his face.

“Yeah, I’m okay. Just a little itchy. Please, continue.” Hitoshi takes another bite of his food and follows it with a big gulp of wine.

“I think you’re having an allergic reaction to something, ‘Toshi,” Denki quietly points out.

“Why do you say that?” Hitoshi squints and scratches at his neck and face with vigor.

“Uh, you’re totally breaking out.”

“Where?” He scratches at his arms.

“Like, all over?” Denki reaches in his bag and hands Hitoshi a compact mirror.

Hitoshi pops open the mirror and his mouth falls open. “This is bad.” He reaches for the glass of wine and Denki pulls it away.

“No. You need to not eat or drink anything else. We don’t know what’s causing this reaction.” He flags down the waiter and asks for the check. Once the check comes, he throws down a few bills, leaving a nice tip, and helps Hitoshi to his feet. Hitoshi’s lips are swelling just a bit and the hives are becoming more pronounced. “I have medicine at my place. It’s not that far from here. Do you want to go there or to the hospital?”

Hitoshi attempts to smile. Despite having a terrible allergic reaction, he finds the strength to be sarcastic when he says, “This is just your way to get me back to your place, isn’t it?”

Denki rolls his eyes. Sure. I totally slipped something in your drink or food that would make you resemble a gargoyle right now. How did you figure out my master plan?”

Hitoshi laughs, “I knew it!” He frowns as he scratches at his forearms. “I think we need to hurry and get back to your place. I’m very, very itchy.”

Denki decides that taking the train would be a mistake and decides to call for a car. The entire ride back to his place, Denki has to hold Hitoshi’s hands to keep him from scratching. Hitoshi makes a lame joke about Denki just wanting to hold his hands and Denki couldn’t help but laugh at that.

Once inside, Denki gives Hitoshi medication and encourages him to make himself comfortable. Hitoshi flops down onto the couch and stares up at Denki apologetically.



“I’m sorry. I ruined our date.”

Denki shakes his head. “No, the date doesn’t have to be over.” Denki walks to the kitchen and brews them each a cup of coffee. “Find something to watch on TV and I’ll join you in a few minutes,” he calls out. He arranges a few different fruits and cheese on a plate. He balances the plate on his forearm and holds the cups of coffee carefully as he shuffles to the living room. He hands Hitoshi his cup and places the other cup and fruit on the coffee table. “I’m going to change, I’ll be right back.” Hitoshi nods as he sips his coffee.

Denki changes out of his clothing and opts for putting on his Pikachu onesie. He leaves the hood off, because that would be too much for a first date. He practically skips back into the living room and flops on the couch next to Hitoshi.

“Pikachu, huh?” Hitoshi smiles over his cup of coffee.

Denki giggles and nods. “My inner beast. What’d you pick to watch?”

Hitoshi presses play and an anime with cute children fill the screen. Denki pulls his legs up underneath him and leans against Hitoshi, getting comfortable. After the first episode ends, Denki is leaning forward with a tissue clutched in his hands, dabbing at his eyes.


“Why Conny?! In the first episode?! This is horrible Hitoshi. Why didn’t you tell me?” He whines a little too loudly.

Hitoshi takes the tissue and wipes away Denki’s tears. Denki stares at Hitoshi, leaning in slightly with his lips parted. Hitoshi closes the gap, wrapping his arms around Denki, and kisses him. Lightly at first, but the kiss deepens. Denki sighs softly and melts into Hitoshi’s touch, holding onto him. Hitoshi pulls away first, tucking the strands that have fallen across Denki’s face behind his ear.

“Denki-“

“Hitoshi, I have to tell you something,” Denki cuts him off. He looks away from Hitoshi, choosing to focus on his hands as he launches into the story about his relationship with Neito. He tells him about the few instances of physical abuse, the countless episodes of verbal and emotional abuse, and how Neito showed up at his apartment over a month ago and made Denki doubt himself. He apologizes profusely for that day but points out that he’s not good at relationships. “I don’t want to hurt you like I hurt Neito,” he finishes, his voice soft and small.

Hitoshi gently cups Denki chin and pulls his gaze up to his own, staring intently as if he was searching for something. Once he’s satisfied with what he’s found, he smiles and softly replies,



“That won’t happen, kitten. And even if you do hurt me, it won’t be intentional. We’ll figure it out together. Oh, and, I highly doubt you actually hurt that asshole of an ex. Sounds like he’s just trying to emotionally manipul-“

Denki lunges forward, crashing his lips into Hitoshi’s, cutting him off. The TV goes unwatched as Denki and Hitoshi become entangled.



“If you keep on coming in here every day, Denki is going to offer you a job,” Hanta laughs as Hitoshi hands him a few books to put back on the shelves.

“That’s actually not a bad idea,” Denki quips cheerfully. He wraps his arms around Hitoshi’s waist and smiles up at him. “How about a job babe?”

Hitoshi kisses Denki’s forehead and grins sheepishly. “Well, I kind of can’t work here.”

“And why is that?” Denki asks, feigning offense.

“Well, my dad’s own this store.” He chuckles nervously.

Hanta and Denki stare, mouth agape, at Hitoshi.

“Then why did you come in here? You knew we don’t carry textbooks!” Denki nearly shouts.

Hitoshi blushes as he replies, “I saw you when I passed by one afternoon, but I was too nervous to say ‘hi’ so I just made up an excuse and...here we are.”

“Aww, how gay,” Hanta coos. “I’m so jealous.”

The seasons go by and as they pass, Denki and Hitoshi grow closer. They spend nearly every day together, with Hitoshi either coming into the shop, or waiting for Denki to get home before coming over with dinner. They’ve fallen into a comfortable routine within their undefined relationship. Hitoshi has tried multiple times to ask Denki to be his boyfriend, but Denki shakes his head and points out that they’re already committed and exclusive, so he doesn’t need labels.

Denki is reorganizing a shelf when Hitoshi comes in one day. He’s drawn to Denki like a moth to flame and crowds his space in the same manner. Wherever Denki moves, Hitoshi is a step behind him. A hand placed on the small of Denki’s back, a kiss pressed to his cheek, and after a couple of hours of this subtle affection, Denki is flustered.



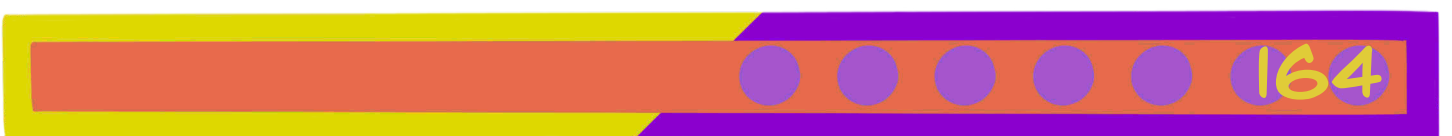
Hitoshi presses a kiss to Denki's temple, and it happens. Denki short circuits. He discharges a high voltage of electricity, knocking Hitoshi back and rendering him unconscious.

"Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit," Denki repeats, freaking out. He rushes to Hitoshi and kneels over him, checking his pulse, muttering repeatedly, "Please don't die. Please don't die. I haven't even told you that I love you 'Toshi!"

Hitoshi cracks open an eye. "You what?"

Denki blushes and swats at Hitoshi's shoulder. "Nothing. You're fine. You need water?" He moves towards the water dispenser.

Hitoshi's hand closes around his forearm, stopping him. He pulls himself to a sitting position and yanks once on Denki's arm, pulling him into his lap. "I love you too Kitten."





I thought the tattoo wouldn't look as good as she wants.

No problem.

So I told her that, and she got mad at me.

You know...

I just don't get it.

Why does everyone want roses? There are so many flowers!

Roses are basic.

But there is some flower you enjoy drawing?

Isn't there?





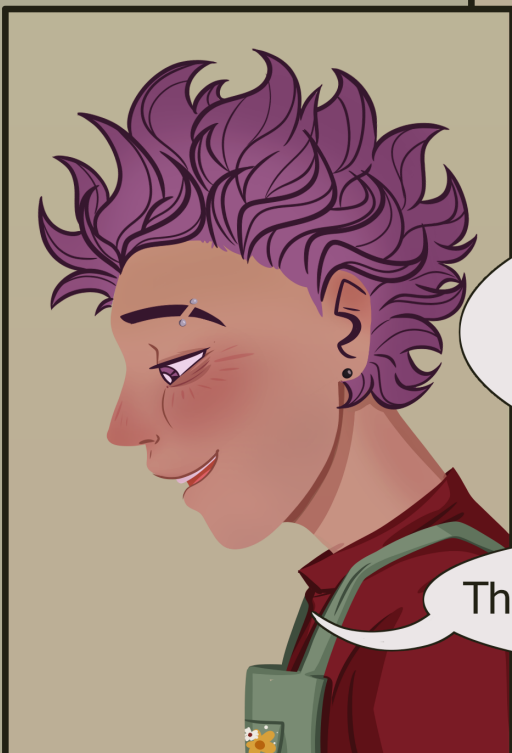
Yeah. I think...

I like lavender.



Ew I thought it was going to be more creative.

That's bad even for you.



HEY!
THAT'S
RUDE!

Okay, okay I'm sorry.



NOW I'VE GOT YOU IN MY SIGHTS

FLARE LUNARI

Tags: Fluff, humor, pining, flirting, getting together, kissing


Denki felt a little apprehensive when he was walking down the sidewalk, almost wrinkling the flyers in his hands because he was holding them too tightly. The bicycle repair shop was only a few houses down from his own workplace and it was so nondescript that he would have missed it the first time he walked by if it wasn't for his natural curiosity. Being stuck behind a counter drove him crazy if he didn't walk off some of his energy during breaks, even if he really loved his job. So whenever he could, he just explored the whole shopping street.

Normally a repair shop like that would never catch his interest, but the one time he actually noticed it – well, let's say he pretty much fell in love at first sight. His eyes had immediately zoomed in on the cute purple haired guy he could see through the store window and he'd made it his mission to pass by every day since. Sadly he was too much of a coward to actually go in there and flirt with the guy or even just say hello. So instead he creepily watched from afar.

Unfortunately, his friends had eventually noticed what he was doing and were giving him shit for it. Eijirou usually told him to man up and just talk to the guy, while Hanta laughed at him because he was lame. A month had gone by since his discovery and Denki lost himself more and more in daydreams of the gorgeous guy. Eventually his friends – that were also his co-workers – had decided to involve their boss, and Taishirou had jumped at the chance to meddle.

So here he was, flyers in hand and on the way to the one place he usually avoided. Because clearly people that went to get their bike repaired wanted a 50% off coupon for waffles. Taishirou had insisted and even though Denki knew it was just a setup he couldn't exactly refuse to do it. Especially since he had been ordered to leave them in several stores. The hair salon and bookstore had been easy because he'd had casual conversations with the employees there before, but when he finally stood in front of the repair shop Denki just wanted to flee.

When he was standing in front of the window he could see him right away and Denki had to reign himself in so he wouldn't drool. His purple hair looked like he just got out of bed and a black smudge adorned his cheek. The black coveralls were sadly loose on him, but he always worked with the sleeves rolled up, and damn did his arms look muscular. Denki wanted to feel them around himself so badly and snuggle up to Mr. Gorgeous.



First he had to actually talk to him, though, instead of gawking starry-eyed. Suddenly the guy looked up and wow, his eyes were purple too. Denki just stared and nearly turned tail and ran away when he finally realized that he'd been spotted. Gathering all of his courage, he finally walked up to the door and pushed it open. The smell of grease and rubber assaulted him when he entered and shit, he'd never been so close to the other man.

Up close he could see dark shadows under his eyes and he was at least a head taller, if not more. Denki felt really small compared to his dream guy and that just intrigued him even more.

"Can I help you?" His voice was deep and gravelly and Denki couldn't suppress the shiver that ran down his spine.

"Ah...yes. Uhm, hi?" The guy chuckled and Denki wanted to slap himself for being so stupid.


"Hi yourself." By then he had stopped working on whatever bicycle he was fixing and walked even closer towards him. Denki wasn't sure he could handle the proximity, but he couldn't really back away either.

"I'm Kaminari Denki. I work at the waffle place a few houses down..." Well, that was at least something. Purple eyes seemed to look him over and Denki blinked owlishly at the other man. Was...was he checking him out?

"Shinsou Hitoshi. I've seen the place, but...What brings you here?" Finally, he had a name for Mr. Gorgeous! Shinsou Denki had quite a nice ring to it. But he was getting way ahead of himself. For all he knew Shinsou probably thought that he was an idiot. Not that he could fault him for that.

"Oh ah, yeah...Flyers?" He waved the stack of paper with a dopey grin and just wanted a hole in the floor to swallow him up. Denki somehow felt like that chick in the 80s dance movie that told the hot dancer guy she was carrying a watermelon. His lack of brain activity in the face of beauty was truly concerning.

"Hm, sure, I'll put them on the counter." Their hands brushed when Shinsou reached out for the flyers and Denki nearly had a heart attack. He suppressed the urge to pull his hand back and handed them over with a shaky smile. The other man grabbed the stack of paper and deposited it on one side of a fairly cluttered counter, having to stretch a little bit to do so. Denki almost blushed at the way the fabric of the coveralls pulled tight and accentuated Shinsou's figure.



His eyes snapped back up to the other man and he realized that he was caught staring because the smirk that greeted him was downright sinful. Before either of them could say anything further, a scruffy looking man with long dark hair shuffled into the room and stared at them with a sour expression.

“Stop this flirting nonsense and get back to work, Hitoshi. You’re done with what you came for, right?” Denki felt his face flush and Shinsou nervously rubbed the back of his head.

They stared at each other of a few more seconds before the purple haired man cleared his throat. “Ah, yeah. It was nice to meet you, Kaminari.”

He didn’t really know what to say, so Denki just nodded and left the shop with slumped shoulders. The scruffy dude was probably the unfriendly owner of the repair store that people in the neighborhood were whispering about. Now he understood why. But maybe he would chance running into him again, if that meant he could have another conversation with Shinsou.




The next day, Denki found himself in front of the repair shop once more – a fresh stack of flyers in his hands. Apparently Taishirou really wanted him to succeed in his endeavor to woo Shinsou, because he insisted that Denki replenish those flyers every day from now on. It was utterly ridiculous, but at least it gave him an excuse if anyone thought it was odd.

Like before, he watched the other man through the large window and boy oh boy was the view even nicer today. His coveralls were halfway unzipped and the sleeves dangled next to Shinsou, giving Denki a really nice view of his muscled arms. The tight white undershirt he was wearing also left fairly little to the imagination and god was he ripped.

Denki definitely had to close his eyes and do some breathing exercises before he could even think of facing Mr. Gorgeous again. When he was at least somewhat composed, he resolutely walked towards the door and entered the store.

He wasn’t sure if it was just his wishful thinking or if Shinsou’s eyes really lit up when he recognized him, but he’d take it. Seeing those abs up close though could really become a problem for him. “Kaminari, nice to see you again. Are those more flyers?”

Denki nodded and smiled sheepishly. The fact that Shinsou actually remembered his name made him feel all warm and tingly on the inside. “Ah, yeah. My boss insisted I bring some more, you know – just in case.”



He spotted the first pile on the counter, seemingly untouched. No real surprise there. Instead of bothering the other man with it, Denki just dumped the new ones on top of the old stack. If Taishirou kept sending him here, they would eventually be able to build a tower with them.

“Hmm, sure. So...Are you just the errand boy for the waffle place, or?” Denki chuckled and stepped a little closer, while he desperately attempted to keep his gaze on Shinsou’s face instead of...elsewhere.

“Nah, I make waffles too. I just like to go on walks when I have a break and such, so the boss-man usually sends me for these kinds of things.” Shinsou cocked his head to the side and nodded. Denki wished he knew what was going through his head with the way he was looking at him.

“Makes sense, I guess. You seem like the...outgoing type.” The statement was so completely deadpan that Denki wasn’t sure how to take it. Was it a good thing or a bad thing that he was outgoing? Oh gosh, hopefully Shinsou didn’t think he was annoying or something?

“How about you? Are you the only one that works here? Well...you and uhm...grumpy dude?” For a moment the other man stared at him, then suddenly he burst into laughter and damn if that wasn’t a good look on him. Shinsou’s eyes crinkled at the corners and his hand splayed over his belly as he nearly doubled over.


“Hah, yes. It’s just me and...and *grumpy* dude here.” Denki scratched the back of his neck and looked at Shinsou a little helplessly, wondering what he had said that had the other man still in stitches.

“What’s with all the noise, Hitoshi? Oh, it’s you again. Don’t you have anything better to do than harass my son?” His mouth dropped open and he stared first at Shinsou, then at grumpy dude. The statement replayed itself in his head and then it dawned on Denki that he was looking at his prospective father-in-law, which nearly made him faint.

“Is that necessary? He’s not harassing me and was just bringing over flyers again. Can’t I talk to people?” The dude huffed and turned around, marching back into what Denki assumed was his office. “Sorry about him. You...you don’t have to leave.”

Denki couldn’t help the smile that was blooming on his face, but he didn’t really know what to say. Did Shinsou actually like talking to him? If so, the feeling was definitely mutual.

“So...Grumpy dude is your dad, huh? I’m so sorry.” He was feeling slightly mortified, but the cute chuckle his red face drew from the other man was worth the discomfort.



“Don’t worry about it, Kaminari.” Shinsou’s fingers lightly brushed Denki’s and for a moment he thought he forgot how to breathe. He didn’t know how to handle the situation so the natural flight response kicked in.

“I-I have to go back to work now. I’ll see you soon!” Without waiting for a response, Denki turned around and left the shop as fast as he could without looking like a complete idiot. Even though he clearly was one. Holy shit, could he have been any dumber? Shinsou probably thought that he wasn’t interested now and that was obviously the last thing he wanted the other man to think. Shit, shit, shit.

Sooner than he would have liked, Denki reached his workplace and was greeted with raised eyebrows. “You’re back already? No luck this time either?”


He groaned and took a seat at the counter, letting his head fall onto the polished wooden surface. Luckily there were no customers at the moment.

“I’m so stupid. Why am I so stupid?” Taishirou lightly patted his head and put a glass of water in front of Denki.

“What happened?” Mr. Gorgeous voluntarily touched him and it felt so damn nice, but of course he was a total idiot that always fucked things up for himself.

“I...I think I might have accidentally given him the impression that I’m not interested.” He groaned and Taishirou made a sympathetic noise while he wiped down the rest of the counter that wasn’t occupied by Denki.


“Well, I guess you’ll just have to bring over more flyers tomorrow.”



“Fancy seeing you here.” Shinsou greeted him with a smile and Denki relaxed a little bit, feeling strangely relieved at the warm welcome. Maybe he hadn’t completely ruined his chances yet.

“Haha, well. I don’t really know what my boss is thinking, but he made me come over again.” Without so much as a word about it, Denki just dumped the new batch of flyers on the old ones. The little pile precariously shifted to the left and he busied himself with shuffling it together properly.

“You don’t seem too thrilled about that...” The smile was gone now and Denki fell into a state of mild panic. How could he reassure Shinsou that he loved talking to him and was just a total



of mild panic. How could he reassure Shinsou that he loved talking to him and was just a total disaster when it came to these things?

“No no, I am! I...like talking to you.” Wow Denki, smooth. What’s next – declaring his undying love and intention to marry Shinsou so they could live happily ever after and adopt some kittens?

“I’m glad to hear that. Hopefully you won’t run off again then.” Denki stared at him with wide eyes and didn’t know what to respond. Was...was the other man flirting with him? Or was he hallucinating?

“I won’t.” Shinsou gestured for him to follow and Denki just did it without thinking. The back office was thankfully empty, no sign of grumpy dad dude. A small two-seater couch stood in one corner of the room, the other was occupied by a large desk that looked pretty chaotic.

“My dad isn’t here today, so I figured we could chat for a bit?” He slumped down on the couch and pointedly looked at the empty space next to himself. Denki hesitated for a moment, but then just thought ‘fuck it’ and sat down next to the purple haired man. The couch was fairly small and they had to sit close to each other, legs brushing. He could smell Shinsou’s cologne and wished he could get even closer.


“What do you want to talk about?” Normally he was the master of small talk, or any kind of talk, really. But right now Denki was so enraptured by the man next to him that his brain to mouth coordination was severely handicapped.

“Well, how about you tell me something about yourself?” Denki drew a complete blank at the question. What was he supposed to tell the other man?

“Uhm, I’m...twenty-two, I’ve worked at the waffle house for about a year now and my best friends work there too. I like hamburgers and...memes?” He probably couldn’t have made himself sound any lamer if he tried. Denki wanted to groan and hide in a hole for the next ten years. Shinsou seemed rather amused though.

“Was that a question or a statement?” Before he could stop himself, Denki lightly punched him in the side and pouted.

“Statement of course. What about you?” Shinsou grabbed his fist and held onto it, something that was completely unexpected. The touch was gentle though and Denki didn’t want him to let go, if he was honest.



“Hey, hey, no reason to become violent. And me? Coincidentally we’re the same age and well, I’ve worked here pretty much all my life. Dad brought me with him when I was a kid and I learned everything while I grew up. It’s not the most exciting job, but I’m happy that I can help out with the family business.” He shrugged and seemed a little self-conscious about it. Before Denki could say anything or reassure him, Shinsou continued. “Other than that I study psychology. All of my classes are in the evening though, so I’m usually here during the day. I like reading and cats.”

Denki lit up like a Christmas tree and couldn’t help the chuckle that escaped him. Seemed like there was nothing standing in the way of them adopting a bunch of cats when they got married. Now he just needed to get to that first.

“Something funny?” Shinsou cocked his head to the side and Denki flushed, quickly shaking his head.

“It’s just cute. The cat thing.” The other man’s cheeks had a bit of a rosy hue and Denki thought that it was even cuter. Shinsou was utterly endearing.

“Well...” They were still touching and Denki lightly squeezed Shinsou’s hand before letting go again. “Sadly, I have to go now. My boss is probably wondering if I got lost or something.”

Shinsou nodded in agreement but Denki couldn’t help but notice that he looked slightly sad.


“I’ll be back tomorrow – promise.”



And so Denki’s daily visits to the bicycle repair shop continued. By the end of the week a quarter of the little counter was filled with stacks of waffle flyers and he knew a lot more about Hitoshi. They were on a first name basis now and Denki felt giddy just thinking about seeing the other man again.

To say they were starting to become friends instead of just mere acquaintances would probably be the best way to describe their relationship, but Denki wasn’t satisfied with that. Yet, he still hadn’t managed to ask his Mr. Gorgeous out on a date or even properly make it clear that he had more than just friendly feelings for the purple haired man.

Hitoshi greeted him with a one-armed hug and Denki practically melted against him, tossing the flyers on the haphazard pile when they separated. Purple eyes watched him do it and there was a strange kind of determination in the other man’s gaze. He stepped forward and practically cornered Denki against the counter.



“Denki. What is the real reason for you showing up here every day?” Oh shit. All this time he’d fervently hoped that this question would never come, because what was he supposed to say? My boss and friends thought I’m such a giant loser that they have to send me here with shitty flyers so I actually even talk to you in the first place? Why did his brain always have to short circuit when Hitoshi came so close?

“I...I like you.” With a smirk Hitoshi crowded even more into Denki’s personal space and god, why was he so gorgeous?

“Is that so?” He came closer and closer, their lips almost touching. Hot breath fanned over his cheeks and Denki shuddered with anticipation but nothing happened. Hitoshi just looked at him and seemed to be waiting for something. He didn’t know what to do. Should he take the plunge and close the last remaining distance, initiate the kiss? Yes, he should. For once Denki wanted to be brave, so he grabbed the other man by his shirt collar and yanked.

When their lips finally touched it was like a spark of electricity ignited between them and Denki’s hands slid into soft purple hair, frantically carded through the strands. Hitoshi kissed him gently but quickly took control of the kiss and Denki let him, mind still reeling that it was really happening. When the other man deepened the kiss, he couldn’t stop a low moan. A hot tongue invaded his mouth and Denki slid his own against Hitoshi’s, nearly felt his knees give out under him. They were both panting when they separated and Hitoshi securely wrapped his arms around him.

“I wanted to do that since you came in here for the first time...” The words were intimate, whispered against his lips and before he could stop himself, Denki initiated another kiss. He felt on top of the world and so, so relieved that his Mr. Gorgeous felt the same. If that was an actual option, he never wanted to stop kissing Hitoshi.

“I like you so much, Hitoshi...” Those big hands gently caressed his flushed cheeks and Hitoshi pushed a loose strand of hair behind his ear. They smiled at each other like two teenagers in a sappy romantic comedy, but Denki wouldn’t have it any other way.

“The feeling is definitely mutual.” Just when they were about to lean in for another kiss, someone cleared their throat behind them and of course – grumpy dude. Shit, he had completely forgotten about Hitoshi’s dad.

“I can take care of the rest. Just...get out of here. And take those damn flyers with you, they’re taking up way too much space!” Denki snickered and put a hand in front of his mouth, still red in the face. Together they gathered the flyers and stuffed them in a bag. Hitoshi offered him his hand and Denki took it, interlacing their fingers. Together they leave the shop and



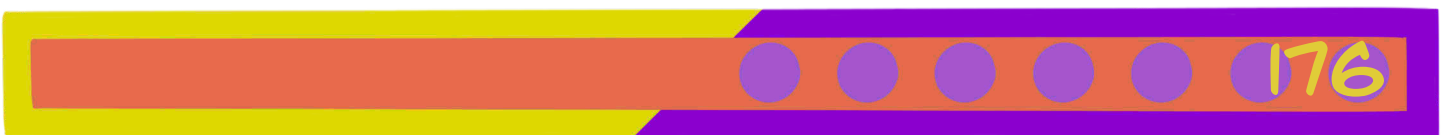
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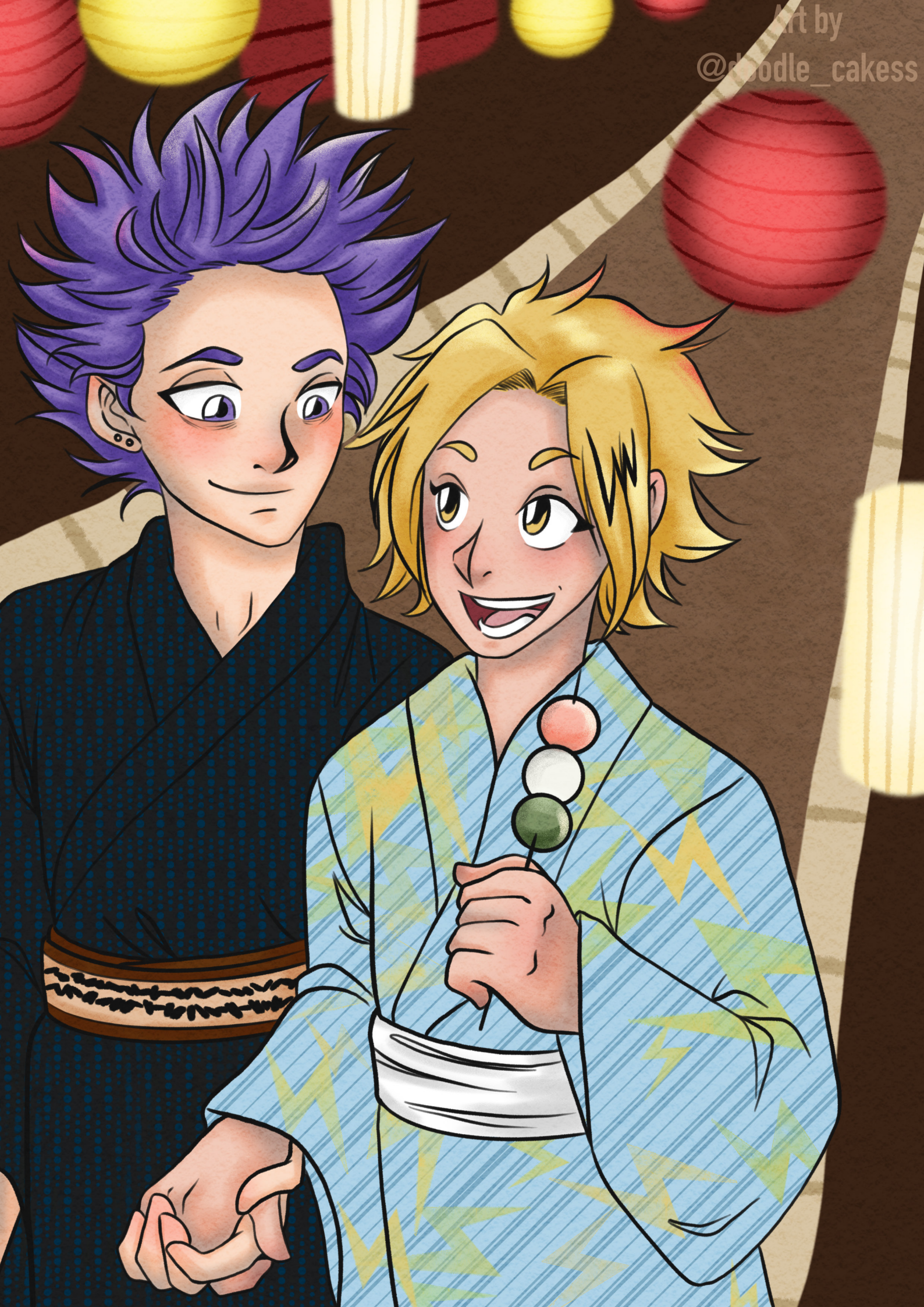
“So...do you like waffles?” Purple eyebrows raise in confusion at his odd question but Denki just smiles dopily at him.

“Sure.” Giddily he swung their hands between them and Hitoshi chuckled.

“Good! ‘Cause I make the best ones in the whole city!” A snort made Denki pout and he elbowed the other man lightly. Hitoshi just squeezed his hand and pressed a soft kiss to his knuckles.

“Lead the way.”







MOM AND DAD ISCHEMIA

Eri was bored.

Her adoptive parents, Hizashi and Aizawa, rarely had time to play with her. On top of that her new older brother, Shinsou, was busy catching up to the hero class he'd transferred into a month ago. She loved them all dearly but she wanted someone new to play with, and she knew exactly who to request.

She was currently giving her father her best puppy eyes.

"Pleeease, dad?" Eri's bottom lip jutted out in a pout that had Aizawa flinching.

"My students aren't allowed in this apartment and that's final."

The little girl crossed her arms, "But Hitoshi's here!"

Aizawa and Eri could see Shinsou on the couch trying to look like he wasn't paying attention to the scene before him. Shouta shook his head, "He doesn't count and you know it."

This did nothing to dissuade her.

"So make someone else not count too!"

Aizawa sighed, "Don't you have enough friends already?"

Eri could tell she was starting to win him over. She went in for the kill.


"I understand if you don't want me around anymore," she averted her eyes with a tearful expression, "I know work is more important to you."

"Alright," Shouta exhaled heavily, "You can have one person over. *Just* one."

Gotcha.

"So make someone else not count too!"

Aizawa sighed, "Don't you have enough friends already?"



“I understand if you don’t want me around anymore,” she averted her eyes with a tearful expression, “I know work is more important to you.”

“Thank you, daddy!” Eri rushed forward to hug one of Aizawa’s legs. He ruffled her hair, careful not to tangle it on her horn.

Shinsou chuckled, “She’s got you wrapped around her finger.”

Aizawa shot him a look that clearly read ‘you’re one to talk,’ but didn’t deny the accusation.

Hizashi came in from the kitchen, adjusting his gloves and preparing to leave for the afternoon, “What’d our big girl make you do now, Shouta?”

“She didn’t *make* me do anything. I just agreed that she was allowed to spend time with one of the other students. She has yet to say which, but I have veto power.”

“You know who you should ask?” Yamada said, looking at Eri with a smile, “that nice new friend Hitoshi has.”

Shinsou looked up from his homework with trepidation, “I don’t have any friends.”

Hizashi gave him a fond look, “I’m sure.”

Eri realized what it was her papa was getting at. She might have been young but she wasn’t blind to hearing her big brother talk about who he spent time at school with. She also saw the look on his face whenever a certain blonde was mentioned. Eri decided to take their fate into her own hands.


“I want Kami!” she cried, tugging on Aizawa’s pant leg for emphasis.

“I’m sure he’s busy-” Shinsou tried to interfere, but Hizashi interrupted.

“What a great idea! If I remember correctly he has some younger sisters and a lot of energy. I’m sure he’d make a great new friend for our princess.”

The blonde man turned to Hitoshi and winked, “Maybe even a good big brother.”

Shinsou rolled his eyes, clearly onto what it was they were trying to do.



“He’s probably busy with his friends. You know what Bakugou and his gang are like.”

Mic blatantly ignored him, waving his hand idly as he patted Eri on the head.

“Why don’t you ask your big brother to give him a call?”

Eri needed no further suggestion, and walked over to the couch to stare Shinsou down with wide begging eyes.

“Please?”

She knows he doesn’t stand a chance, and inwardly crows when the purple-haired boy rolls his eyes and pulls out his phone. Eri notes to herself that it’s significant if her brother has the other boy’s number and what a good sign this is. She knows how much he hates using it. Hitoshi is setting his phone back down when it buzzes to life, and Eri leans on her brother to get a better look at it. Kaminari had answered with “duh!” and a series of emoji that Eri had never seen used in conjunction before.


She turned to look up at her papa with a smile, and Hizashi turned to Aizawa to say, “looks like we have our babysitter sorted.”

The four of them lived on campus, as did all of the students, so Eri knew it wouldn’t be long before Kaminari got here. She busied herself with running to her room to collect the toys she wanted to play with. Eri had only taken two steps out of the room when she heard her brother say, “I know what you’re doing” to their father.

She turned around to watch Hizashi smile innocently and respond, “I have no clue what you’re talking about,” before meeting Eri’s gaze and winking at her. The white-haired girl winked back and ran to her room with a giggle.

She knew her big brother had trouble making friends, and that he put zero effort into building meaningful relationships with his fellow students, but seeing him so lonely all the time made Eri sad.

She knew the energetic blonde from 1-A was a nice boy; she’d even seen him play guitar at the cultural festival, and she thought that Shinsou could use someone like that in his life. After all, daddy had papa and they were very happy together. Surely that just means Hitoshi needs his own partner and then Eri would get even *more* family.



Not that long ago, Eri wouldn't have had the courage to ask for friends- much less insist on even more of them after taking advantage of the puppy eyes her papa taught her- yet here she was about to play happily with her brother and his crush.

She was *really* proud of herself.


Aizawa and Hizashi both came to wish her goodbye before heading out to work, with her dad petting her hair gently and her papa giving her a big hug. She would miss them but she had learned they always come back, despite how dangerous their job was. Sometimes she still got nightmares about them leaving, but then she'd find Hitoshi and he'd tell her he has the same worries but knows their parents love them too much not to come back. It always sets her mind at ease, even if she isn't sure Shinsou believes his own words.

Now wasn't the time for somber thoughts. She had a new friend coming over soon and it was time to get ready for him. The girl smiled to herself as she grabbed some dolls, a plastic purple teapot, a hairbrush, and some hair ties. She took a long look around her room, her daddy and papa- who she would occasionally refer to as 'mommy' because it made Aizawa laugh at the face Hizashi would make in response- spoiled her rotten and she had all the pretty trinkets to show for it, before she realized the other stuff she'd need was in her parent's bedroom and the kitchen.

She ran to those rooms and grabbed an old tie of Aizawa's and Hizashi's frilly yellow cooking apron. When she'd gathered everything together she made her way back to the living room to find Shinsou nervously fiddling with his calculator and fruitlessly trying to focus on the math homework laid in front of him. For a moment she felt bad that she was putting her brother in such a state, but then she remembered how happy her parents looked when she caught them sharing quiet moments together. She wanted that for Hitoshi and she was going to get it. It wasn't long before the doorbell rang and Shinsou lept up from the couch before freezing where he stood- unsure about whether or not he should get the door.

Eri dropped her stuff down onto the couch and grabbed Hitoshi's hand before leading him to the doorway. Eri could reach the knob herself but she wanted Shinsou to be there when she opened it.

Hitoshi grumbled about her 'pushing' but followed her dutifully and opened the front door with no preamble. Kaminari stood there holding a couple of bedraggled flowers she recognized- he'd clearly picked them from the small garden right outside the dorms. The blonde held them out to the girl with a bright smile.



“Hello miss, do you know where Eri is?”

“*I*m Eri!” she laughed.

“No way!” Denki said while clutching the flowers against his chest, “but you’re so big! The Eri I know was, like, ten inches tall!”

Shinsou rolled his eyes from where he stood, ignored by the other boy so far. The white-haired girl continued to giggle, pleased that her new playmate was even more fun than she remembered. The blonde handed her the recently plucked flowers and she took them inside to find a cup to place them in. She heard Shinsou awkwardly invite him in as she left the room. When she got to the kitchen she went up on her tip-toes to grab a mug with a paw print design from the dish rack and filled it with water before placing the already-wilting flowers into it and bringing it back into the living room. She put it on the coffee table while saying, “Ta-dah!”

Kaminari applauded her and ruffled her hair in a way that Eri wished Hitoshi would do more often. He could stand to learn some things about brother-ing from the boy that reduced him to blushing. She’d never seen that look on her brother’s face before, and it only made her more certain of how she wanted today to go.

“How does she usually play?” Denki asked Shinsou, who shrugged in response.

“I don’t know. She brought dolls?”

Kaminari made a big show of seeming disappointed in the purple-haired man’s answer, “You don’t even know how your little sis plays? Next you’re going to tell me you haven’t even been to a tea party.”

Before Shinsou could answer one way or the other, Eri jumped in excitedly, “We can have a tea party?!”

“Heck yeah, we can!” Denki beamed, “The best tea party you’ve ever seen.”

Hitoshi started to look anxious, “I don’t think Da- Uh, Aizawa-sensei lets her have caffeine...”

“Dude, you don’t drink *real* tea at a tea party. You use your imagination!” The blonde mimed pouring himself a cup and held onto an invisible teacup with his pinky finger extended politely. “Like this!”



Eri nodded vigorously and looked to Shinsou to join in as she pretended to pour some tea into Denki's "cup."

Shinsou awkwardly copied the boy across from him, his own much larger hands looking very silly in Eri's opinion as he scrambled to hold a nonexistent cup.

"You got it, big bro!" Eri clapped her hands. She was honestly proud of him for joining in. He would usually sit with her while she played but he always got too shy to actually interact with her. Eri knew it was hard for Shinsou to relax and just be silly so she never felt hurt by his reluctance. Seeing him play pretend with her and Kaminari made her heart warm.

"Den-Den," Eri said confidently, "Let's play family!"

"Sure thing, squirt." Denki winked at her, "who do you want to play?"

Eri smiled innocently, "I'll be the baby, and you two can be my parents!"


Denki was soon handed the frilly apron and he put it on without quarrel, even laughing a bit at himself once it was tied securely around his waist. Eri gestured for him to kneel down, and when he did she tied his hair up into a smaller version of Hizashi's usual bun. Once she deemed him acceptable she turned to Shinsou to find him giving her a suspicious look. Eri was sure he knew what she was doing, but she had no intention of stopping anytime soon. She handed Aizawa's tie to Hitoshi and waited expectantly.

The purple-haired boy rubbed the back of his neck anxiously before putting on the tie and looking both tired and miserable, which only made him appear more like her father than before. Eri clapped her hands in glee over how perfectly she'd recreated her parents.

"Now we can have our tea party," she announced, grabbing both Shinsou and Kaminari's hands to drag them toward her room.

She had a mini table and chairs set by her bed where she would draw with crayons and make Aizawa and Hizashi sit and play with her. It was undersized for adults and forced her parents to look absolutely ridiculous, and it wouldn't be much better for teenagers. Eri looked forward to tormenting her big brother, lovingly of course, and brought him over to sit down at it.

Hitoshi looked dubiously at the size of the chair before checking to see what Kaminari thought. The blonde, however, had already happily plopped himself down in the miniature seat, his knees nearly at his chest. Denki looked up at Shinsou with what Eri could only describe as great affection, and gestured for him to join him.



Hitoshi sat down hesitantly, bending long legs awkwardly in an effort to sit comfortably at the mini table set. Denki gave him an approving smile, and the purple-haired boy hid a relieved look under a stern expression.

“Shall I pour the tea, madam?” Kaminari said, gesturing to the purple plastic teapot sitting on the middle of the tiny table.

Eri’s eyes lit up as she answered, “Yes, please, mommy!”

The blonde boy froze, one arm extended to grab the teapot now just hovering awkwardly in the air. His face went red and he muttered, “Mommy?”

She didn’t look at her brother but she was sure Hitoshi looked as though he was praying for death.

“Yeah, you’re just like my mommy! Big bro is more like our dad, so you have to be the mom!” For a moment Eri was scared she pushed too far, but Denki simply nodded at her reasoning and gave her a wide excited smile.

“Whoa, Aizawa is married? I didn’t even know he was dating! What’s his wife like? Does she have a creepy smile too? Or is it an opposites-attract situation?”

Eri thought about Hizashi’s near-constant grin before answering, “Um, she’s very happy and loud! Blonde too. You’d get along with her.”


She looked at her brother for assistance and Shinsou sighed before adding, “Definitely opposites attract. They balance each other out. She’s got too much energy,” he paused before adding, “though you probably wouldn’t think so.”

Eri giggled at the mock outrage on Kaminari’s face.

Denki shook his head, firmly. The frilly yellow apron bounced as he put a hand over his heart and replied, “Moms need a lot of energy! Their job is nonstop, you know? Like a hero!”

Hitoshi sighed, “I mean, he is a hero.”

Eri knew Aizawa would give them that look of exasperated disappointment if they found out they’d tattled about his love life to the loudest student in his class, so she kicked Shinsou’s leg under the table.



“I mean she. Uh, mom’s a hero too,” Hitoshi corrected himself. “You’d know her name but it isn’t my place to say. Anyway, weren’t you supposed to be pouring tea?”

“Oh, you’re right!” Denki yelled. “Oh man, I hope it didn’t get cold while we talked!” The boy continued to pour the ‘tea’ from the plastic teapot on the table into the invisible cup that Eri mimed in her hands. After a few seconds he asked, “Is that enough or do you need room for milk?”

Personally, Eri hadn’t had a lot of tea in her life. She thought about how Hitoshi would insist that putting milk and sugar in coffee was a waste of space for more coffee, so decided she would take the same stance.

“No thank you, mommy. I don’t add anything to it,” she glanced at Shinsou and had a feeling he was aware of who she was imitating. After all, he probably only felt that way about coffee because their dad did.

Denki pretended to pour more tea as he replied, “Whoa, that’s intense! I’d have expected that from your big bro cause I’ve seen the monstrosly bitter stuff he drinks but now you. I have to put a ton of milk and sugar in mine just to stomach it.”


Hitoshi crosses his arms somewhat defensively before adding, “The only tea you drink is boba tea and that hardly counts. It’s just sugar water anyway.”

“Duh, Shin,” Kaminari laughed, “that’s what makes it good!” He looked to Eri and added, “You know, no matter what this sour puss says there’s nothing wrong with liking sugar or milk in the stuff you drink. Long as you eat your veggies every now and then still, anyway.”

Eri thought on this before hesitantly asking, “May I have a bit of milk and sugar in mine then? Just to see if I like it?”

Denki’s smile was as bright as Hizashi’s would get when he caught Shouta sleeping at a reasonable hour, “You bet! If you don’t like it I’ll pour you a new cup.” He winked, and she caught Shinsou rolling his eyes fondly.

Kaminari pretended to pour in a bit of milk and added a few sugar cubes. Eri laughed as she thought to herself that if being a pro hero didn’t work out for him he’d have plenty of opportunities to go into mime. He’d be the loudest mime in the world, though, and Eri was pretty sure that was against the rules.



“There, now give it a sip and tell me what you think,” Denki encouraged, setting the plastic teapot down on the table.

Eri lifted her invisible cup to her mouth and took a sip before making a thoughtful expression. She found it very cute that Kaminari looked like he was actually concerned about whether or not she’d like it, and decided to cut him some slack.

“It’s perfect, thank you mommy!”

“Alright!” Denki shouted, lifting a hand for a high-five that Eri quickly returned. He then looked at Shinsou and stuck out his tongue childishly. “Good to see only one person in this family has bad taste.”

“Yeah, me. For marrying you,” Hitoshi replied.

Kaminari pouted, “Hey! I’ll have you know I’m a real catch! Just for that I’m putting milk and sugar in your tea.” The boy pretended to pour a cup for Shinsou and then dramatically emphasized adding milk and five sugar cubes. He handed the cup to Hitoshi and waited for him to take it.

Shinsou’s cheeks were red and his actions hesitant, but he reached out to grab the air where they all pretended the cup was. Eri noticed he shot her a look as if to ask if he was playing right, and it hurt her heart a little bit to realize Hitoshi must have never gotten to do these sorts of things as a kid. She nodded encouragingly at him and smiled, which made his shoulders drop a bit of tension.


“You’re doing great,” Denki said, pulling his hand back now that Shinsou had taken the imaginary cup away.

Hitoshi looked at his pretend teacup and lifted it to his mouth the way he’d seen Eri do a moment before. He made a gulping sound with his throat and then scowled. “It’s way too sweet. Here, you finish this one.”

Shinsou handed the pretend cup of tea back to Kaminari who looked at it scandalously before asking, “An indirect kiss, huh?”

Hitoshi’s cheeks went red and he made an attempt to grab the cup back from the blonde but Denki held it out of his reach, laughing. “Come on, I’m your wife! If you can’t kiss me, who can you kiss? Wait, don’t admit to any cheating. Our baby is right here.”

Eri shrugged, “Mom and dad kiss all the time, though dad pretends he hates it if we’re in the room too.”



Kaminari snorted, “Sounds like Aizawa alright. Man, that lady has got to be some kind of saint to put up with it. But I guess when you really care for someone all that attitude is love-able.” He got a faraway look in his eye as he spoke, and Eri hadn’t realized he was such a hopeless romantic until now but she wasn’t surprised by it.

Eri nodded, “Mommy always says that dad’s cutest when he’s frowning.”

Denki smiled warmly, “Some people can pull off being cute even with a face like they were just told they got detention. I know someone like that.”

She was hoping she wasn’t reading too deeply into it when she saw his head tilt a bit in Shinsou’s direction.

“Here dad, I’ll pour you a new one!” Eri lifted the teapot and waited for Hitoshi to hold out his pretend teacup.

“Thanks,” Shinsou mumbled, extending an arm and awkwardly waiting for her to finish pouring.

“What kind of tea is it anyway, I don’t recognize the taste,” Eri asked.

Hitoshi looked down at the pretend cup like it was a riddle Aizawa had given him as a test. Denki must have noticed his frustration because he offered, “Well, I know my hubby loves to keep caffeine handy so it’s probably a black or green tea.”

Shinsou shot him a muted grateful look before stating, “Black tea. The kind Aizawa got from Hizashi when he was told by Recovery Girl to stop drinking as much coffee.”

Eri nodded, remembering that horrible week where Shouta lasted a whole three days without his favorite beverage before passing out during the middle of a training exercise and terrifying his entire class.

Hitoshi lifted the pretend cup to his mouth and took another sip, anxiously glancing at his sister to make sure he was still playing properly. She nodded and followed suit by pretending to drink from hers.

Eri then looked to Kaminari and found him watching Shinsou with a soft expression. It almost seemed a little sad which made the girl frown.

“Is something wrong?” Hitoshi asked.



Denki stopped staring at Shinsou and looked to Eri, cocking his head and adding, “Bored already? We could play something else. Can’t have our princess looking glum!”

Eri considered her options. She didn’t want to upset her brother and tell Kaminari how he felt, but she also hated seeing the electric boy looking at Shinsou like he was some unattainable dream.

She decided on being subtle and offered, “I’m sleepy, can you both tuck me in and tell me a bedtime story?”

Denki smiled easily and answered, “Of course! Do you have a favorite book or something you want me to read to you? Or maybe you’d rather have Shinsou do it? He has a nice voice.” Hitoshi rubbed the back of his neck awkwardly and averted his eyes at the compliment, but his sister could see the faint red on his cheeks.

“Could...could you and big bro make up a story? One just for me?” Eri asked, honestly worried she was pushing for too much.

Kaminari stood up from his too-short chair and stretched with a groan. He put his hands on his hips and looked to Shinsou before saying, “I’m game, but I can’t speak for Shinsou. You up for it, dude?”

Hitoshi, face still a bit flushed, shrugged in response. After catching his sister’s hopeful glance he sighed, “Alright, we’ll come up with a story for you. Kaminari and I will step out for a moment. Go change into your pajamas and call us in when you’re ready okay?”

Eri nodded excitedly, jumping up and running to her drawers to pull out the Ganriki Neko nightgown that Aizawa had gotten her. It was an ugly green color with a cartoon cat face on it that she used to hate, but ever since she found the photo of her new dad wearing the same brand of clothing as a kid she had fallen in love with the brand. It made her feel closer to her dad when he wasn’t there.

The two boys left the room and she could hear them talking. Mostly it was Denki yammering on and then a soft mumbled response from Shinsou that she couldn’t decipher through the closed door. Whatever Kaminari was talking about he was as animated as ever, and his boisterous laugh gave her the same warm feeling that she got whenever Hizashi laughed. It was the kind of joy that is perfectly relaxed and unafraid to be loud. In a house with three people who were terrified of taking up space, for differing and similar reasons both, it meant everything to have someone who was free and happy. Eri hoped that Kaminari would come by again in the future.



He really did remind her of her papa.

After changing, she ran to the door and opened it. Denki was gesturing with his hands and seemed to be in the middle of a story Shinsou was paying apt attention to, but he froze upon seeing her there.

The blonde gave a lopsided grin and drawled, “Let me guess, Aizawa bought you those PJs.” Hitoshi snorted, “Gee, how could you tell?”

“No woman would do that to a child, Shin,” Denki replied, gesturing to the gaudy clothing. “Eri is lucky that she’s so adorable she manages to make it work anyway!”

Eri’s smile grew as she remembered how Hizashi is usually the one to tell her about how nice she looks in various clothes, while Aizawa nodded approvingly in silence. She could see both parents perfectly reflected in the two boys in front of her as Hitoshi offered that same affirming nod, quietly proud of his sister and letting her see that without needing words. After all, Kaminari talks enough for the both of them.

Denki bends forward a bit and ruffles her white locks, “You ready to hop in bed and hear a story, princess?”

“Yes, please!” Eri spins around and climbs up onto her puffy warm blanket covered bed and sits on it to wait for the two to join her.

Kaminari strolls in first and looks thoughtful for a moment before he says, “Doesn’t your hair get tangled when you sleep with it loose like that? Want me to braid it for you?”

Eri’s eyes light up with joy as she nods voraciously. She hops off the bed to grab the brush and hair ties she bundled earlier and brings them to Denki who helps her back up onto the bed. Shinsou sits down beside her, looking nervous and unsure.

Kaminari put the hair ties around his wrist and picked up the brush. He started to drag it carefully through her hair as he asked, “You want to get the left side while I do the right?”

Hitoshi jerked, surprised that he was being asked to help. “I don’t know how to braid it. Mom always does that for her.”

“It’s easy!” Denki insisted, “I’ll show you each step and you copy them on the other side. You’re like, the smartest guy in our class. You’ll pick it up in no time!”



Shinsou opened his mouth, no doubt in an attempt to argue the compliment, but Eri stopped him short by saying, “Pretty please, big bro?”

She knew he was weak to her wishes, and as expected the tired boy caved.

“It probably won’t look good,” Hitoshi added, but sat down at her side and took the half of her hair that Denki handed him nonetheless.

“Okay, so you separate it into three parts like this to start,” Kaminari began, demonstrating immediately with agile hands that had clearly made many a braid. He slowly walked Shinsou through crossing one of the outside parts over the middle one and repeating until Eri had a neat plait down one side that he expertly locked in place with a hair tie.

Shinsou had been less successful, and sat there glaring at his hands for not cooperating with his eyes and copying Denki’s movements exactly. He frequently tugged a bit too hard on her hair, but Eri was so touched that her brother was even trying that it didn’t bother her in the slightest.

Kaminari peeked over her head to spy Shinsou’s work and then chuckled at the sight. He picked up the brush and stood up, standing next to him as he asked, “Want me to show you again?”

Hitoshi grimaced, his teeth grit and his scowl as deep as his eyebags. “No, I’ll get it.”

Denki nodded, “I’m sure you will, but Eri is pretty sleepy and still wants a bedtime story. How about I help teach you some other time and you let me help you finish this one now?”

Eri agreed. It was reasonable and logical. Even Aizawa would have to say yes to that, so Shinsou could hardly argue. Instead of taking over completely and doing it himself, Kaminari placed both of his smaller hands around Hitoshi’s larger ones, and helped manipulate them quickly into a considerably neater braid. It wasn’t as pretty as the one he’d done on his own, but it actually looked like a braid this time. Eri noticed, with no small amount of satisfaction, that Shinsou looked terrified and impressed all at once as his red face nodded along to Denki’s directions. She doubted he heard a word the boy said, probably too focused on the casual closeness that she knows her brother longs for- just like her- but he always had more trouble asking others for it.

Kaminari reluctantly let go of Hitoshi’s hands and stepped back, offering a victorious “Ta-dah! Not too bad, yeah? You’ll be a pro in no time!”



Shinsou's hands, once released, immediately jerked back to rub at his neck.

"Storytime?" Eri asked, watching the two boys both blush and avoid each other's eyes. Kaminari's voice broke a bit as he yelped, "Y-yes! Storytime. Let's get you under the covers, princess."

Eri pet her new braids happily and pulled back the blankets to slide underneath. Shinsou remained seated on one side with Kaminari sitting back down on the other.

"What kind of story do you want?" Denki asked, as he tucked the blanket neatly under her chin and pulled her braids to the side so she wasn't laying on them.

"I want a love story," Eri mumbled, embarrassed but hopeful. "Maybe one with heroes?"

Kaminari nodded thoughtfully before turning to Shinsou and asking, "How about I say a few lines and then you say a few and we go back and forth?"

Hitoshi had never come up with a bedtime story for Eri before, and she knew she was putting him on the spot but she had hopes that Denki would make it painless for him. The energetic boy had been happy to help assist in every other way, surely he wouldn't let her brother suffer too much.

Regardless of his inexperience, Shinsou nodded at Denki's suggestion. "You start."


"Once upon a time," Kaminari began with a smile. "There was a very brave young hero. He had the deck stacked against him from the beginning, but he never let it stop him from chasing what his heart longed for and becoming a hero."

Hitoshi froze, looking a bit panicked when he realized Denki was waiting for him to continue a story that sounded all too familiar to him.

"Uh," Shinsou started awkwardly, "his family was really important to him. He didn't start off with a very good one, but a very kind couple adopted him and his very precious little sister. The hero wished he was a better brother for her, but he loves them all very much."

"He also has some really great friends," Denki added with a wink.

Hitoshi snorted, "Though he specifically requested that others leave him alone."



Kaminari ignored him, smiling widely at Eri and continuing, “The heroic boy would do anything for his family, who he loved very much, but sometimes it got him into trouble. One day, he heard that his precious sister was missing her favorite doll and that a villain had taken it!” Shinsou’s brow furrowed as he thought for a moment before adding, “This villain had captured the doll and tied it up at the top of a very tall tower.”

“He was going to use it to take over the world!” Denki said, eyes wide with fake fear. “But our hero planned on stopping him.”

Hitoshi adjusted the blanket around Eri’s shoulders, “He couldn’t do it alone, though. He would never admit it but he liked knowing his hero friends were there if he wanted them. Well, they were there even if he didn’t.”

All three of them shared a small laugh and Kaminari continued, “A very special hero in particular came to his rescue that day! You could even call him a soulmate to our story’s hero.” Denki looked uncharacteristically shy after he spoke, but Hitoshi helped him by adding more to the story on his turn, saying, “When the hero was standing at the top of the tower, the villain surprised him and pushed him back. He started to fall towards the edge.”

Eri looked up at them both, frightened that the story’s ending would be a sad one.

Kaminari put a hand on her shoulder and said, “But then the hero’s soulmate appeared and caught him! Then, with their powers combined, they defeated the villain and brought back the beloved doll that had been stolen.”

“The end,” Shinsou finished, looking quietly pleased with himself for being able to make up a bedtime story for the first time.

“But what happened to the hero and his soulmate?” Eri asked, looking between both boys anxiously.

Denki chuckled, “We-...uh, they haven’t figured it out yet but they’re working on it. I promise.” He turned to Hitoshi and added, “I bet they’ll live happily ever after, right?”

Shinsou grinned crookedly as he nodded, “Yeah. Happily ever after.”

“And you know what that means?” Kaminari asked Eri.

“What does it mean?” she responded.



“That it’s time for you to close your eyes and go to sleep,” Denki whispered.

Eri pouted at the idea of her playtime with them having to come to an end, but she was feeling very sleepy.

Shinsou nodded, “I’ll show Kaminari out, you close your eyes okay? I’ll come back after and check on you. I’ll even sit in here and read if you want.”

“Wait,” Eri cried. “You have to say goodbye like mommy and daddy do!”

Denki cocked his head, unsure of the ritual.

Shinsou, however, knew exactly what his sister was implying and had already started to argue when she continued, “Mommy always gives daddy a good-luck-and-stay-safe kiss when they say goodbye at the door! What if something happens to you if he doesn’t give one?”

“Eri,” Hitoshi growled, his cheeks red.

Kaminari let out a tiny laugh, “I’d hate to put Shinsou in any danger. I guess one kiss can’t hurt. Do you mind?”

“What?” Shinsou went from red to white, shock written clearly across his face.

Denki shrugged, “I wouldn’t want Eri to feel too anxious to go to bed. Come on, would a kiss from me be that terrible?”

Eri could tell Kaminari was a little afraid that her brother would confirm his fears and refuse, she looked up to Shinsou and waited for the verdict.

“Fine,” Hitoshi sighed. “But just one.” After he finished speaking he closed his eyes tightly like he was expecting a hit.

Denki’s face lit up, all carefree smiles and happy thoughts again. He grabbed Shinsou by the tie he still had loosely knotted around his neck and pulled him in to press a quick kiss against his cheek.

Eri watched her brother’s eyes open in surprise, clearly having expected a kiss on the mouth. The mix of shock and disappointment on his face made Kaminari start to laugh, and soon Eri was chuckling with him.



“Now that we know you’ll be safe. I should head back to the dorms. I got a lot of homework to procrastinate on!”

Hitoshi stood up, his face still ruddy but his expression was composed. “I’ll show you the way out. Stay here, Eri.”

The two boys got up and left, so Eri immediately snuck out of bed to follow them. She walked on her tip-toes behind them, watching as Shinsou silently led Denki to the front door. Eri hid behind the couch to see them say goodbye.

“Thanks for inviting me! Your sister is the sweetest,” Kaminari spoke somewhat nervously. “I, uh, liked spending time with you too, of course.”

“Eri definitely liked you, so she’ll probably ask for you to come back sometime,” Shinsou replied, avoiding the blonde’s sentiment.

“I think I can manage that, if you can stand me hanging around,” Denki laughed while turning to head out the door. He stopped short and added, “Oh, before I forget! One last thing.” Kaminari turned back around and grabbed Hitoshi’s face with both hands and kissed him soundly on the lips before whispering, “Good luck and stay safe, ‘Toshi.”

Denki winked and wiggled his fingers in a goodbye, leaving right after. Hitoshi stood dumbstruck in the doorway, letting the cold air in.


A tired voice from behind Eri startled her, “I knew it was a bad idea to let the brat babysit.” She spun around and saw her dad and papa had been sitting in the kitchen, fully able to see the scene that just took place in the doorway. Shinsou yelped, slamming the door behind him and looking at his family with panicked eyes.

“I’m going to bed,” Hitoshi spat, clearly letting them know he had no intention to discuss what happened.

“This early?” Hizashi said, a laugh in his voice.

Hitoshi stomped by his parents and sister, attempting to give them a glare but only managing to look flustered and confused before he disappeared into his own room with another slam of the door.

“Did I do something bad?” Eri asked, looking up to her parents and worrying her bottom lip between her teeth.



Before Aizawa could inevitably agree that she had, Hizashi ruffled carefully around her nicely braided hair and picked her up and laughed, “I think we’re going to be seeing a lot more of that kid.”

Eri saw the loving look her parents exchanged, and couldn’t help but recognize it was awfully similar to one she’d seen two *other* lovebirds wear earlier. She yawned and rubbed her eyes, shuffling back to bed as she congratulated herself on a job well done.



FOUND BY THE BOUNTY HUNTER

GREATCLOUDNINJA

Tags: Omegaverse, Western,

“Mr. Kaminari? We’re stopping soon.”

Denki Kaminari looked up from the messy needlepoint project he’d been working on to focus on his handler. A tall blond Beta man, Mr. Hizashi Yamada worked for a company whose purpose was to help wealthy Alpha and Beta men find the perfect Omega bride. They commonly worked with Omega finishing schools: academies where young men and women of society would be taken upon presenting. The finishing schools taught the Omegas everything they needed to know to be a proper mate. Child rearing, household management, and social etiquette were only a few of the lessons drilled into the young Omegas during their time at the finishing schools.


Denki had been at one since the tender age of eleven. Unfortunately, due to his early presentation and his family’s size—he had an older sister and brother, plus twin younger sisters—his family couldn’t afford to send him to a proper finishing school. However, one school did make an exception and accepted him as a charity case with the agreement that the school would receive any dowry once he was of proper mating age.

The headmistress, an older Omega woman who went by Mrs. Kayama, was strict but fair and encouraged her students to learn as much as they could across a wide range of subjects. Their education made them appealing mates for high-class Alphas who wanted someone to run their households and entertain important guests.

“Where are we stopping this time?” he asked curiously.

“I believe the station is in a frontier town called Cloud Bluff, Colorado,” Mr. Yamada replied. “If I remember correctly, this is a refueling stop, so it will take a couple of hours. Would you like to take a brief turn around the platform to stretch your legs?”

“Oh, yes, please!” Throwing the gnarled embroidery thread and hoop into his satchel, Denki stood from the hard wooden bench seat and followed Mr. Yamada off the train—almost forgetting his parasol in the process.



The train platform was tiny, only big enough for maybe a dozen Alphas. But then, the town itself was tiny as well. A rough-and-tumble collection of windworn buildings lined a single street. From their vantage point, Denki could see a general store, a smithy, a sheriff's office, several houses... and a saloon.

His eyes widened in surprise and excitement. He had heard stories of saloons before! They were dens of iniquity and sin, where men, especially Alphas, drank liquor and played cards while Omegas played music and sang for their entertainment. He wanted to visit it, but he needed a way to get out of Yamada's sight first...

"Oh! Mr. Yamada, could we visit the general store and see if they have some hard candies? I'm so thirsty all of a sudden... this dry air has parched my throat and I think a piece of peppermint candy would soothe it quite well." Denki fluttered his eyelashes and pursed his lips in a coquettish pout, trying to look innocent.

"Well... I suppose it wouldn't hurt to visit for a little while. We do have a couple of hours before the train leaves." Mr. Yamada held out his arm to Denki, who wrapped a gloved hand around his elbow and walked with him down the dusty road toward the general store. As they walked, he caught a glimpse of a man in a black hat riding a horse toward the town. Before he could get a better look, though, Mr. Yamada shepherded him into the building.

The shopkeeper, a tall and broad-shouldered man with thick lips and dark hair, smiled at the two as they walked in. "Welcome to Cloud Bluff! Name's Rikido Sato. Y'all just come in on the train?"


Mr. Yamada nodded. "Yes, we're traveling to California and the train needed to make a stop to refuel. My charge here said he wanted to buy some candies."

"Well sure! We make all the sweets you see here in-house." He gestured to the glass set neatly in rows on the display. "What flavor you lookin' for?"

"Oh, um, peppermint if you have it?" Denki asked. "Back home we have these peppermint candies that are really soft, almost fluffy? They melt in your mouth. They're my favorite."

"Hmm... you know what, lemme take a look in the back and see if we got somethin' like that." Rikido smiled at them both before he stepped around the counter and disappeared behind a door.

"Well, what a charming fellow!" Mr. Yamada said to Denki after a moment of silence. "Since we're here, I suppose it wouldn't hurt to take a look at his tobacco selection... Stay close, Mister Kaminari. I would hate for something to happen to you!"



“Yes, sir,” Denki murmured. He followed Mr. Yamada over to a display of pipes, rolling papers, and bags of tobacco. The older man started to pore over the bags, thumbing through the different varieties as he stroked the small moustache on his lips.

The bell over the door rang merrily as a handful of voices filtered into the room. Denki took advantage of the sound and distraction to duck behind the vacated counter and sneak around to the door Mr. Sato had recently used. “Hey, Rikido!” one of the new voices called out. “Saw the train stopped at the station and wanted to see if you had gotten anything new in?” Kam-inari ducked behind a large pile of burlap sacks just before the tall man turned and walked back out into the main store.

With a sigh, Denki looked around the room—thankfully there seemed to be another exit. He tiptoed across the storage area toward the door and dashed along the back of the building. He passed by the back of the smithy, ducking as he passed by a window so as not to be noticed, then circled around to the saloon down the street.

The saloon stood at a whopping four stories tall, dwarfing the other buildings in town. Denki couldn’t help wondering if it also served as an inn for travelers as he pushed through the swinging doors into the dark interior.

“Welcome, doll!” A woman called out to him, making him jump in surprise and turn to look. She had shockingly *pink* hair, cut close to her head with tousled, messy curls. Instead of a regular dress or smock, she wore something gauzy and fluttery in green and purple, which wrapped around her body and tied at the waist while exposing a dramatic amount of bosom. What was more surprising than anything was that she was clearly an *Alpha*. “Y’alright there, sugar? Hope I didn’t scare ya!”

“N-no! I’m fine, uh, how are you?” Denki glanced around nervously, but the inside was quiet for the time being. There was one man in the corner, short with a gray beard; a large hat covered most of his face, so Denki couldn’t tell for sure, but he seemed to be asleep.

“Oh, don’t mind ol’ Sorahiko over there! He had a fight with his wife last night and stayed here to avoid runnin’ into her. She’s the town doc so she gets around, yanno? So what’s your name, sugar?”

“I’m Denki! I’m from the east and I’ve never seen a real saloon before, so I wanted to take a look while we waited for the train to refuel...”

“Well, Mr. Denki, it’s a pleasure to meet ya! My name’s Mina Ashido, and I’m the proprietress of this fine establishment here! You say you’re from the east, huh? Must be one of them city



slickers, based on the way ya talk and your pretty dress! That kinda fashion hasn't made it 'round these parts yet."

"Ah—yes, ma'am, I'm from the city. Chicago, to be exact. I'm moving to California to mate with an Alpha..." Denki snapped his mouth shut quickly. He probably shouldn't be talking about that part...

His cheeks went red with embarrassment as the look on Mina's face fell slightly. "Oh hun... have ya met this Alpha before? Or is this one o' them arranged matings?"

"Well... not *met*, exactly, but we've written letters! And I have a photograph of him. He's quite handsome." Denki reached into the small purse hanging from his elbow and withdrew a palm-sized locket, opening it up to reveal the photograph of his future mate. He was handsome enough with fine features, though a large scar covered the skin around one eye. One side of his hair was dark and the other light—but it was impossible to tell the exact color from the photograph. "His name is Shoto Todoroki. His father is the one who arranged the mating with my finishing school. He's the heir to a substantial gold mining operation!" Denki parroted the words that Mr. Yamada had used when he'd first come to Mrs. Kayama's finishing school to procure a suitable mate for the young heir.


On paper, Shoto Todoroki was an impeccable specimen of an Alpha; Denki knew he should be overjoyed to have been chosen as his future mate. But it was never the life he'd wanted to live. He dreamed of something different—of lights and the stage, of fans and *freedom*.

"I see." Mina didn't seem impressed, but she didn't say anything else about the subject. "Well, since you're here, why don't you meet my girls? I'm sure they'd love to get to talk to a fancy city Omega!"

"You have daughters? But you seem so young!" Denki exclaimed.

Mina's laugh in response sounded almost musical. "No, no, they're not my children! They work here! My performers and waitresses. They live upstairs on the top floor. The second and third floors are for travelers and... *clients*." Denki's brow furrowed in confusion at the tone of voice Mina used on that last word, but he didn't ask. Probably better not to know.

Mina walked over to a brass tube that came out of the wall behind the bar, lifting a flap over the opening and speaking into it. "Rise and shine, ladies! We have a special visitor, an Omega from the city! Come on downstairs and meet him!" She walked around the bar and offered her hand to Denki. "C'mon, sugar, let's go backstage to meet the girls! They probably won't be ready for polite company at the moment, so you can meet with them in private."



“But what if someone comes into the saloon?” Denki asked worriedly, glancing around—the place was empty except for the sleeping old man in the corner.

Suddenly, the doors swung open and a handful of men tumbled through the door. The first was an angry-looking ashy blond Alpha in a cowboy hat, the second was a grinning, lanky Beta man with dark hair, and the last was—another male Omega? He seemed big for an Omega, though; tall and broad-shouldered, wearing pants and a shirt just like any other Beta or Alpha, and a mane of red hair that spiked in the front. He had a clear mating mark on his neck, though, and he immediately approached Mina. The woman broke off and nuzzled against him for a quick scenting. “Hey babe! Did y’all find anything good at Rikido’s place?”

The red-haired man shook his head. “Naw, the train’s a passenger carrier, not cargo. Just here for fuel.” He glanced over and blinked in surprise at the sight of the other Omega in the room. “Oh, hey there! Ya musta come off the train, huh? What’re ya doin’ here by yerself? This ain’t no place fer an unmated Omega with no chaperone!”


“My chaperone’s at the general store! I just... wanted to explore a little...” Denki looked down at his hands, twisting the lacy hem of one of his gloves nervously. “I, um...” He felt tongue-tied all of a sudden—surely these people wouldn’t care about his trepidation or his wish for freedom.

“Don’t listen to Eijiro here,” Mina said quickly. “I swear no harm will come to you while you’re in my saloon. If you ever feel uncomfortable, just say the word and Katsuki there will take care of the rest.” She gestured over to the angry-looking blond, who jutted his lower jaw out in a growl and threw up a rude gesture. “He’s my muscle man, keeps the peace ‘round here. And Hanta’s the bartender! Makes the meanest cocktails this side of the Rockies!” The grinning Beta tipped an invisible hat in Denki’s direction.

“It’s nice to meet you all... I’m Denki Kaminari. I’m from Chicago, and I’m... well, I’m *supposed* to be travelling to California to be mated to an Alpha there. But... to be honest, I don’t want to go!” He stomped his foot, but almost immediately cringed at his own childishness. “Excuse me... that was rude. I’m sorry.” That kind of behavior would have gotten him sent to bed without supper at his finishing school!

Mina gave the younger Omega a tender, pitying look. “No need to apologize, sugar! Trust me, we’ve all been there one time or another. That’s why we moved out here to the middle of nowhere.”

Eijirou nodded. “Sorry for scarin’ ya, Denki! Didn’t mean no harm by it, I was jus’ worried ‘bout ya! But we’ll all protect ya if ya wanna stay here an’ work in Mina’s saloon!”



“That’s a great idea!” Mina smacked a fist into her other palm. “We can hide you here! The train’ll have to leave without you at some point!”

Denki’s eyes went wide in surprise at how quickly Eijirou and Mina had just... accepted him. “R-really? You would do that for me? I wouldn’t want you to get in trouble...”

“Naw, don’ worry ‘bout us! This feller yer goin’ ta mate sounds like an asshole anyway if’n he’s gotta order an Omega all the way from Chicago!”

“Well, Shouto seems nice enough. His father is the one who arranged things with my finishing school. From what I understand, he’s paying quite the hefty sum of money... and since I was a charity case, they jumped at the chance to recoup some of what they’d put into my education.”

Mina’s upper lip twisted in an instinctive snarl before she caught herself. “That settles it then. You’re officially part of our pack here. We’ll do everything in our power to protect you, sugar!”

Denki had to blink hard to push back the sudden tears that threatened to fall. “Thank you... you’re all being so kind, and I have no way to repay you...”

“Of course you do! You can work here for a bit until you get your feet under you, but most importantly, seeing you happy and free will be all the payment we need.” Mina reached out and wrapped her arms around Denki impulsively, bringing his head right into her bosom. He flushed bright red, especially when he saw the look of jealousy and longing on Eijirou’s face.

As soon as her grip loosened, he slipped away and gave the man an apologetic smile. “So, anyway... you said there were some girls you wanted me to meet?” Denki asked her.

“Oh! Yeah, they’re probably all backstage by this point! Come with me.” Mina led him across the room, where a velvet curtain covered the front of an elevated stage area. There was a door to the side with a set of steps in front, and she pulled out a brass key from somewhere inside her robe to unlock it.

The backstage area was dark except for a few oil lanterns mounted on the walls. Sure enough, a half-dozen young ladies and one other male Omega—who looked much more like Denki in build, as opposed to the giant Eijiro—were all gathered together, sitting around on cushy chairs in various states of dress. They all looked up from their conversations when the door opened and Mina and Denki walked in.

A tall, female Omega with long black hair in a ponytail asked, “What’s all this about, Miss Mina?” She had a posh accent, like she’d grown up in high society. Denki couldn’t help but



wonder what she was doing in a place like Cloud Bluff; maybe she was like him and had left her previous life to find freedom.

Mina gestured over to Denki and said, “Girls, I’d like you to meet Denki Kaminari. He’s an Omega from Chicago and we’re going to take him in so he doesn’t have to mate with the son of a horrible selfish Alpha in California.”

The group was silent for a long moment before everyone exploded into questions. Denki took a half-step back, almost trying to hide behind the Alpha who had just introduced him. “Girls!” the dark-haired one said loudly. “Calm down! You’re scaring the poor dear.” She stepped forward and held out her hand. “My name is Momo Yaoyorozu. You can call me Momo, if you like. It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

Another girl, a Beta with a short, almost boyish haircut, scoffed. “Stop playing miss priss, Yao-momo. We all know your papa was a farmer.”

Momo’s cheeks went pink and she crossed her arms over her chest. “Well, at least I know who my father is, Kyoka. Unlike *some* people around here.”

Kyoka’s own cheeks went red and she rolled her eyes. “So what? At least I ain’t trying to put on airs like I’m made of something more than shit.”

“Girls, please!” Mina exclaimed. “We have more important things to focus on! It won’t be long before the train’s ready to leave, and we can’t let anyone find Denki before then.”

“Oh, I have an idea!” Another Omega, with chin-length brown hair and a rounded face, raised her hand in the air. “We can hide him in the dirty laundry bin! No one will think to look there!”

“If we do that, Ochako, he’s likely to die of the stench of your dirty socks before he gets found,” another girl muttered. The Beta had wide green eyes and dark hair as well, but unlike Momo’s, hers was done in an intricate knot on the back of her head to look almost like a bow.

“Shut up, Tsu! At least my socks don’t smell like rotting fish the way yours do!”

A fifth voice piped up, but Denki couldn’t see where it was coming from. “What if we dressed Denki up in one of our costumes? No one would expect a proper finishing school Omega to be singing and dancing in a saloon, so he’d be hiding in plain sight.”

Tooru piped up again, “This is so exciting! It’s just like some kind of novel! We’ll help protect



Denki from the bad Alphas, and I just bet someone will come in and sweep him off his feet!”

“Come on, Tooru, that’s just fantasy talk. You know the real world isn’t like your romance novels,” Kyoka pointed out.

“I know... but it’s exciting to think about, isn’t it? What’s this Alpha you’re supposed to mate with like, anyway?”

“Oh...” Denki stepped closer to the group of girls and handed the locket to them to look at. “His name is Shoto Todoroki. His father Enji owns a gold mine in California. Shouto is nice enough... if a little dull, I suppose. He seems very matter-of-fact in his letters.”

The girls all passed around the picture, ‘ooh’-ing and ‘ahh’-ing over it—all except for Momo, who seemed almost wistful as she looked at it. “I remember him.”

“What?” Everyone looked at her, astonished. “How do you know him?”

“You know I grew up in Cloud Bluff, right? He and his family were passing through on the train. They had to stop here to refuel, just like Denki here... I met him at the general store. I suppose it was what you would call love at first sight... I hoped that maybe, if I studied and practiced enough, that I might meet him again by chance and he would fall in love with me, too.” She sighed quietly, her eyes wistful as she thought back on that day.


“So that’s why you talk all fancy?” Tsu asked. When Momo nodded in confirmation, Mina’s eyes gleamed as an idea began to form in her head...



“Gone? What do you mean, he’s gone?” The train conductor frowned at Hizashi and crossed his arms over his chest.

“I mean, my charge is *gone*!” Hizashi cried out in a panic. “He came off the train with me and disappeared somewhere while I had my back turned. I thought maybe he’d returned to the train, but he isn’t in our assigned seats and no one has seen him. We can’t leave without him, he’s expected in California!”

“I’m very sorry, sir, but we have a schedule to keep to...” The refueling had taken several hours; it was already nearly dark. “We can delay a little while longer, but only an hour at the most. You can look for him until then, but if you aren’t back, then we’ll have to leave without you.”



With a hesitant nod, Hizashi rushed off the platform. “Oh bother... Mr. Kaminari, why did you have to run off? Where did you go? I thought you were supposed to be a good Omega! Mrs. Kayama must have had me on a string this entire time!”

There was only one place he could think to turn. He made his way to the sheriff’s office, slamming the door open. “I need help!” he cried out as he stepped inside. “Someone’s gone missing!”

Inside the one-room building were two Alpha men: a scowling, scruffy-looking man with dark hair and a gold badge pinned to his shirt, and a younger man with... *purple* hair and tired eyes. Both men wore scarves around their necks and the younger had a black Stetson on his head. They seemed to have been in the middle of a conversation when Hizashi barged in. “Can I help you?” The black-haired man asked, standing from behind his desk. “I’m the sheriff here. Name’s Aizawa.”

“Yes, thank you, Mr. Aizawa. My name is Hizashi Yamada; I came in on the train that arrived earlier this morning to stock up on fuel. My charge, a young male Omega named Denki Kaminari, has gone missing since we were in the general store and I haven’t been able to find him anywhere. The train is leaving in an hour, so if I don’t find him before then, we’re going to be late to our final destination and the family awaiting him will not be happy.”

“I see. So you’ve lost an unmated Omega somewhere in a town with no more than ten buildings. Seems more like a personal problem to me,” Aizawa replied flatly.

Hizashi stepped back with an affronted gasp. “*Excuse me, sir!* Are you or are you not the sheriff of this town?”


“I am. That means I serve the people *of this town*. However, it so happens we have a bounty hunter in our midst.” Aizawa gestured to the tired-looking fellow sitting across from him.

The man stood and offered Hizashi a hand to shake. “Hitoshi Shinsou. I travel from town to town looking for missing persons and criminals who have skipped out on bail.”

Hizashi sighed with relief. “Thank goodness! I would greatly appreciate your assistance in finding Mr. Kaminari!”

“Of course, of course. Let’s discuss payment first, then we can get more into detail about this Denki Kaminari.”

“Oh... Yes, of course.” The man was a bounty hunter, after all. He didn’t seek these people out



of the goodness of his heart. “What is your normal fee?”

“Hmm... Well, given that it’s almost evening and you’re in a time crunch... I’d say \$100.”

“One—*one hundred?*” Hizashi sputtered out. “Sir, that’s—*that’s highway robbery!*”

“You don’t want to have to spend the night, do you? And we don’t get trains through here often... might be a few days before you can get passage out of here, unless you get lucky with a stagecoach.” Hitoshi shrugged. “That’s my fee, take it or leave it. Half now, half when I return with the Omega.”

Hizashi winced, but reluctantly nodded as he pulled his wallet out of an inner pocket of his suit. “Very well.” He counted out the bills and handed them over to the man, who counted them himself before tucking them away.

“Now then. Tell me about this Omega. Do you have something of his so I can get his scent?”


“Yes! Back at the station, I left his trunk and his bag there. I’m sure there will be something with his scent. He’s... about this tall,” Hizashi gestured with his hand to approximate the Omega’s height, “with blond hair and he’s wearing a pale blue dress, blue slippers, a black choker, and white gloves with lace trim. Oh, and his hair has an unusual black streak in it.”

Hitoshi nodded. The description sounded familiar... *oh!* He must have seen them as he was coming into town earlier that afternoon. “Got it. Now, the scented item...?”

“Yes, this way.” The two men made their way back to the station, where Hizashi dug around in Denki’s bag until he found a rather crumpled handkerchief. “Will this work?”

Hitoshi reached out and took a deep breath to get the scent off the handkerchief. The pheromones that flooded his nose were distinctly Omegan, with floral undertones and a hint of summer. But those scents were mixed with the smell of the prairie after a good soaking thunderstorm. The combination was unlike anything he’d ever smelled in the past. A feeling like a bolt of lightning shot up his spine as he breathed it in.

Closing his eyes, he schooled himself into stillness. He’d trained under Aizawa for years before the man had settled down and taken the job of sheriff following old Yagi’s retirement. He knew how to keep his poker face on and hold back any reactions from showing outwardly. But he’d *never* felt anything like that before—especially not from just the *scent* of someone. It made him even more curious about this wayward Omega.



“Yes, of course. Just, please hurry? I only have...” Hizashi checked his pocket watch. “About 40 minutes left until the train leaves.”

“Understood. I’ll find him for you.”

“*Thank you.*” Hizashi sighed with relief and left to go back to the sheriff’s office.

Alone, Hitoshi tucked the handkerchief away and headed to Rikido’s place first, since that was where the man had said he’d first lost Denki. He’d use his nose and his instincts to track the Omega from there.




Denki smoothed the yellow satin fabric over his skin. His outfit was unlike anything he’d ever seen before. The bodice of the dress was designed in a similar cut to the girls’ dresses, with cap sleeves draped with beads and lace; but the skirt was gathered high in the front to reveal a scandalously short pair of bloomers made of the same yellow satin. They stopped above Denki’s knees and revealed a pair of sheer black stockings, which led down to black ankle boots with kitten heels.

“I kind of feel like a bumblebee...” The black beading and lace on the sleeves and the skirt put the striped insect to mind.

Tsuyu couldn’t hold back a chuckle at that. “It matches your hair, though, and it fits for the stage name we came up with for you, ribbit.” She was dressed in green and blue, with a lily pad pattern embroidered around the hem of her dress—supposed to evoke frogs on a lake. It was a bit... unusual as a design, but it seemed to work for her. Denki supposed it was all part of the theatrics.

Ochako, too, was wearing a fawn-brown dress that reminded Denki of a squirrel or chipmunk. In fact, all of the girls were dressed to represent some kind of bird or little animal. They were performing a series of songs about springtime, so it was all perfectly on-theme.

She dusted his face with the powder, then began to outline his eyes with kohl. Meanwhile, Kyouka came in and applied a heavy coating of rouge to his lips and the apples of his cheeks, along with a swipe of mica powder along the highs of his cheekbones. Momo dabbed coal dust over his hair to further obscure his identity before she pinned and twisted his locks into playful curls. “There! You look beautiful. And with your makeup and hair done like this, no one will ever suspect you’re a high-class fancy Omega from the city!”



Sniffing at everyone's kindness, Denki gave each of them a hug in turn. "Thank you all so much! I really appreciate you helping me out!"

"Of course! I think we all know what it's like to want something more than what we have," Momo replied quietly. The girls all nodded in agreement. "Now, you all get out there and start the show!"

"Right!" The girls all stepped out on stage behind the red velvet curtain. As Eijirou pulled the rope to open the curtains, Momo came forward to stand at the front


"Good evening, everyone! I hope you're all having a great night so far!" She scanned the crowd, but so far it seemed like the saloon was filled with their regulars—except for one unusual sight. The bounty hunter Hitoshi Shinsou was just stepping into the building, eyes sharp under his dark hat and scarf. He could spell bad news for Denki, if he was here looking for the Omega...

Taking a deep breath, she continued, "We have a lovely show planned for you all! Your favorite ladies will be singing and dancing for you all night, so we hope you enjoy!" She gave a quick curtsy before stepping back into place on the stage. Eijirou started up the player piano, which began a jaunty tune Denki recognized as the opening notes of the song "My Alpha's Coming Home." However, instead of the wartime ditty he remembered, the girls had very different lyrics:

*My Alpha's coming home, my Alpha's coming home
But I will be long gone, cause I can't wait no more
I've had it with his drinkin', I've had it with his fightin'
So when my Alpha's home, he'll be there all alone*

The lyrics seemed to be poking fun at the crowd, but the men still enjoyed the song well enough. Everyone was laughing merrily, some people calling out to one another that the song must be about them. Denki quickly realized that the songs themselves weren't the main draw of the show—the Alphas were there to watch the Omegas dance and prance about on stage in their makeup and fluttering skirts.

Following the song, the girls stepped down from the stage and took trays, walking around and working the room—refilling beer glasses, getting cocktails, and delivering plates of hot food. After maybe twenty minutes, Momo climbed back on stage. "So how is everyone feeling?" She received a raucous cheer in response—from most of the crowd, at least. Putting on her biggest smile, she continued, "Wonderful! We have a very special guest performance for you that



we've been working on for some time now! She's here from all the way in Dallas, Texas! Please give a warm Cloud Bluff welcome to Miss Honeybee!"

That was his cue. Denki stepped out on stage, fighting the urge to clench his hands into the fabric of his skirt as the crowd cheered. "G-Good—" He cleared his throat and took a deep breath to calm himself. "Good evening, everyone. Thank you for having me. This is a song that's very near and dear to my heart."

Denki was lucky they had the sheet music for this one. Momo sat down at the piano bench and began to play the wistful song Denki remembered from his earlier years at the finishing school. "A bird in a gilded cage" was originally written from the perspective of a young Alpha who fell in love with an Omega promised to another, but it was easy enough for Denki to adapt the lyrics to be something much more personal.


*I am only a bird in a gilded cage,
A beautiful sight to see.
You may think I'm happy and free from care,
I'm not, though I seem to be.
'Tis sad when you think of my wasted life
For youth cannot mate with age;
And my beauty was sold for an old Alpha's gold,
I'm a bird in a gilded cage.*

From the moment "Miss Honeybee" stepped on the stage, Hitoshi's eyes were locked on the young—very *male*—Omega. Even under the cloying mask of perfume, his keen Alpha nose could pick out the scent he'd picked up from the handkerchief: summer thunderstorms and fresh flowers. But this young man wasn't some petulant, misbehaving Omega like he'd expected. Denki Kaminari seemed... desperate, but also resigned.

A bird in a gilded cage, indeed.

As the final piano notes and Denki's last words faded, the crowd were near to tears. "That was the saddest, most beautiful song I ever heard," one man sniffled before blowing his nose loudly into his handkerchief. Denki gave a curtsy—but as he lifted his head, he locked eyes with a piercing lavender gaze, watching him from under a black hat. He bit back a yelp before he scurried back behind the curtain; his heart pounded from more than just the adrenaline of his performance. There was something about the man's gaze... it sent tremors up and down Denki's spine.

He could only guess what that man was doing there; the jig was up. "Girls... thank you so



much, for everything,” he said morosely. “But... I don’t want any of you getting hurt on my account. I’m pretty sure someone out there is looking for me, to take me back to the train.”

“No, you can’t go!” Ochako cried. “That song proves it, you belong here with us! You shouldn’t be trapped in a cage anymore!”

Momo stepped backstage a moment later, a grim look on her face. “You saw the man in the black hat, didn’t you?” she asked him. At his nod, she continued, “He’s a bounty hunter. His name is Hitoshi Shinsou. He works with Sheriff Aizawa to bring in criminals and find people who have gone missing.”

“I was afraid of that... I’m sure Mr. Hizashi hired him to find me.”

Suddenly, the door slammed open—the noise making all of them jump in surprise. “You can’t just go back there!” they heard Mina yell, but the lavender-eyed Alpha wouldn’t be deterred as he stormed backstage.

“Denki Kaminari, you need to come with me,” Hitoshi said. “We can do this the easy way or the hard way. Which would you prefer?”


Denki’s eyes flicked back and forth between the bounty hunter and his new friends. He wanted to stay, but if he did, he just knew they would get hurt. “I’m... I’m sorry...” He murmured to the other Omegas. After a long moment of hesitation, he ducked his head and stepped closer to Shinsou.

“Good choice, little bird,” Hitoshi replied. He took Denki’s arm in a firm grip to lead him out of the backstage area. From this close, Denki could smell him—leather and whiskey and Alpha musk, but with a thread of something almost... sweet. He found his inner Omega wanting to get closer, to figure out what that mysterious scent was.

Mina was on them in a heartbeat. “No, I won’t stand for ya comin’ into my establishment and harrassin’ my employees!” she cried out.

“This young man is not an employee, he is a runaway Omega and I’ve been paid to return him to his guardian.” Hitoshi’s voice was flat and emotionless as he spoke. “If you have an issue with that, take it up with the man who paid me.” With that, he ushered Denki out through the swinging doors.

“W-well... maybe I will!” Mina stomped her foot angrily. “Come on, Yaomomo, get your things! We gotta help Denki!”



“Why are you doing this?” Denki asked as they walked. “Are you really that heartless, to throw an Omega in distress back to the very life they’re trying to escape?”

“I’m doing this because I was paid to do it,” Shinsou replied. Despite the cold words, he glanced over at the blond Omega. “And because I’ve never smelled anything like you before.”

“Y-you...” Denki flushed pink in the cheeks at the comment. “Everyone says I don’t smell right for an Omega. That my scent is too pungent.”

“I think it’s lovely,” Hitoshi blurted out. His own cheeks went pink belatedly at the look of surprise on the Omega’s face and he turned away. He dragged Denki along behind him, ignoring his squawk of protest.

At the platform, Mr. Yamada seemed to be arguing with a few of the train’s staff members. “No, you must wait! He promised he would have Mr. Kaminari here by that time, and... Oh! Mr. Kaminari, you’re back! Thank goodness, are you alright? What in heaven’s name are you *wearing*? Where did your dress go?”

“He’s just fine,” Hitoshi reassured the older man. “Haven’t harmed a single hair on his pretty little head.” Denki blushed and turned away at the comment. “As for his effects, I think you’ll find that they’re back at the saloon, which is where I found him.”

Mr. Yamada’s mouth gaped open in shock. “The *saloon*? Mr. Kaminari, you should be ashamed of yourself! You were raised better than that!”

“That’s not true at all! Everyone was really nice and very respectful!” Denki shot back.

“That’s right!” Denki gasped at the sound of Mina’s voice coming up from behind them. “I’m the proprietor of the saloon and I make damn sure that the health and well-being of my employees comes first—especially my girls.” Mr. Yamada sputtered a little as the spitfire of a woman got up in his face. “Denki here deserves to be free to make his own choice!”

“S-still, my client is expecting a well-bred and highly trained Omega bride! If I leave here without Mr. Kaminari, then I could lose my job or worse!” Mr. Yamada cried out.

Hitoshi crossed his arms over his chest. “So you need an Omega who won’t embarrass the high class folks, right?” he asked.

“Yes, exactly. An Omega of breeding and sophistication. Someone with impeccable manners and class.”



Both men's gazes turned toward Denki, looking him up and down carefully. "I highly doubt an Omega willing to perform in front of rank strangers dressed like *that* is gonna impress his future husband," Hitoshi pointed out.

"Well... you may have a point..."

"Hey, I'm standing right here!" Denki cried. "Don't talk about me like that! I was desperate!"

Mina walked closer to the trio. "I might have a solution to all your problems, Mr. City Man! She ain't born high class, but our Momo's as genteel as they come!" She held her hand out toward the dark-haired beauty that had hung back a few steps.

Yamada looked at the woman with an unimpressed glance. "I'll be the judge of that. If you're proposing some kind of exchange, I'll need to see proof that this young lady is worthy to be married to my client's son."

Momo stepped forward. Unlike Denki's outfit, which showed off the shape of his thighs and calves, her dress bared no more than a hint of collarbone with a demure square neckline and half-length sleeves. She dipped into a perfect curtsy, which she held for three seconds before lifting her head. "Good evening, sir. My name is Miss Momo Yaoyorozu, of the Cloud Bluff Yaoyorozus. It is my pleasure to make your acquaintance." Her voice was soft and melodic as she spoke with perfect clarity. Denki shuddered—she sounded eerily like some of his classmates back at the boarding school. "I met Mr. Todoroki and his family while they traveled between the East Coast and California years ago. I still remember that day vividly and it inspired me to become a proper Omega lady to the best of my ability."

"Hmm..." Mr. Yamada stroked his thin mustache as he watched her. "Not bad. Not bad at all. You say you know of Mr. Kaminari's fiancé, but do you think he would remember you?"

"Well, I am not entirely certain," Momo replied. "I hope that he would, since I have kept my memory of him in my heart for over ten years. But even if he does not remember me, I would still be willing to marry him."

"And what of you?" Mr. Yamada turned his gaze to Denki. "Are you absolutely certain you'd rather stay here and work at this saloon than go to be Mr. Todoroki's bride?"

Taking a deep breath, Denki nodded. "Yes. More than anything, I want my freedom. I want to spread my wings and live on *my* terms!"

Mr. Yamada was quiet for another long moment before he finally nodded. "Very well then."



“That’s fine! She can have them!” Denki grinned and, on impulse, hugged the Beta tightly. “Thank you so much!”

“Yes, well.” Mr. Yamada cleared his throat, but the blush on his cheeks was obvious. “You are on your own now. Do earn your keep! I presume you’ll be taking Miss Yaoyorozu’s spot at the saloon?”

“Course he will!” Mina replied with a grin. “He’s already a hit with my regulars!” She wrapped an arm around Denki protectively. “Anyone who tries to hurt him will have to go through me!”

“Well.” Hitoshi let out a gusty sigh. “Looks like I went through this whole search for nothing. Given the circumstances, I won’t charge you the rest of my finder’s fee.” He glanced over at Denki, who raised an eyebrow in surprise, while Yamada sighed audibly with relief. “You two ought to be going, though. You’re holding up the train.”

“Oh! Yes, you’re quite right. Come along then, Miss Yaoyorozu. If you’ll be taking Mr. Kami-nari’s place, we have a *lot* to go over and not much time to do it.”

Momo nodded. Turning to Mina, she murmured, “Thank you for everything, Miss Ashido.” The two women embraced, then Momo pulled Denki into a tight hug as well before walking past Hitoshi and stepping onto the train in front of Mr. Yamada and the train staff. A few minutes later, the engine belched a cloud of black smoke and the train departed.

“Now then, let’s get you back to the saloon,” Mina said to Denki. She moved to pick up his bag—but Hitoshi got to his first, slinging it over one shoulder. “Oh. What a gentleman you are, Hitoshi!”

“Mind if I escort you back?” he asked softly. “It’s the least I can do after all the trouble.”

“We don’t mind at all!” Mina kept a careful arm around Denki’s, but let Hitoshi stand on his other side as they made their way back into town. Denki leaned in a bit closer—taking advantage of the opportunity to get a better read on Hitoshi’s scent. There was the leather and liquor he’d smelled before, and the Alpha musk was even stronger. But one deep breath let him finally put a name to the mysterious undertone: *jasmine*, like the delicate flowers that grew on the trellis outside his window at the boarding school. A warmth suffused through his body and his breath caught in his throat at the feeling. There was something different about the Alpha... something special. He hoped he would get to talk to Hitoshi properly at some point.

When they got back to the saloon with Denki in tow, the crowd cheered and the other girls



ran over to hustle him to the backstage area. Mina, however, didn't go after them immediately. "Hitoshi, why don't you come to my office for a second? I wanna ask ya something."

"Sure." He followed her over to another door and stepped inside. She pushed it shut, and a few moments later, the music resumed, though muffled by the sturdy wood. "How can I help you?"

"I can't help wondering about something... In all my years of knowing you here in Cloud Bluff, you've never once let someone get away without paying you your due. What's different tonight?"

Hitoshi shrugged. "I'm honestly not sure myself. But... there's something about that Omega. I can't put my finger on it, and I don't like that feeling. But I want to know."

"Oh? Sounds like you might be smitten."

"Smitten? Not possible. We barely know one another."

"But you've smelled him, right? You had to track him somehow. What did you think of his scent?"

"It's... alright, I guess. Not bad. Why?"

"Because to me, he stinks to high heaven. The other girls don't smell it—it's an Alpha thing. It was the same way with Eijirou and me, too. Every other Alpha I knew said he smelled like an old, sweaty shirt left out too long in the sun, but I loved his scent. It's how I knew we were supposed to be mates."

She smiled knowingly at the flush that crossed his cheeks and patted him on the shoulder. "I think you've got some work in front of you to woo him properly, but once you do, he's all yours. Good luck!" With that, she opened the door and ushered him out.

When he looked toward the stage, Denki was out front singing again.

*"I have no sweetheart but you, dear;
You are the one that I love!
Tell me you'll always be true, dear;
True as the bright stars above!"*

As he watched the blond sing for the crowd, his eyes locked onto Denki's and he felt a bolt



of... *something* rush up his spine. For just a moment, it felt like the Omega was singing to *him*...!

The flush on his cheeks deepened and he pulled his hat down to cover his eyes. Taking a seat at the bar, he ordered a drink, but even before Hanta could hand it over, the Omega daintily leaped off the stage and sauntered over to him. He caught a thread of Denki's thunderstorm scent and had to fight the urge to lean in for more.

With a grin, Denki reached out and snatched the black Stetson from Hitoshi's head and placed it on his own at a jaunty angle. He continued to sing the refrain of his song:

*"If I but dream and you wake me,
What would my lonely heart do?
Never, my darling, forsake me
For I have no sweetheart but you."*

He turned and walked back toward the stage with the hat still on his head, but he glanced back at Hitoshi over his shoulder with a smile. From behind the bar, Hanta whistled lowly. "Huh. Looks like he's gonna fit in well around here."

"I don't think he's going to be around much longer," Hitoshi murmured. "Not if I have anything to say about it, at least."


Remembering Mina's words, he smiled. "Tell Mina I'll be by tomorrow to get my hat," he said as he stood. "And to call on a certain new employee." He downed the drink Hanta set on the bar, then slipped the man some cash before he made his way out the door.

He definitely wanted to get to know Denki Kaminari better... it looked like he'd be staying in Cloud Bluff for a while.



"Here you are, gentlemen!" Denki smiled at the group of men playing cards and smoking cigars after a long day of working the fields. He set down a round of beers on the table before collecting their empty glasses. "Anything else I can get you?"

"Not at the moment, Denki, but thank you kindly," Aizawa said as he laid down his hand. "Full house."



Denki had to laugh as the other men grumbled and threw down their cards in disgust. “Is it really proper for the sheriff to be playing poker?”

“I’m just here to keep an eye on things and make sure there’s no cheating going on. Besides, my deputy is making the rounds of the rest of the town, so we’re in good hands.”

As if on cue, the saloon doors swung open and Hitoshi stepped inside. The silver badge pinned to his scarf glimmered in the lantern light. “Speak of the devil!” Denki said with a grin. He walked over to the entrance with his tray balanced on his hip. “I wasn’t sure if you were going to stop by tonight.”

“I’m just checking in on things, since *someone* decided to take the night off.” Hitoshi gave a very uncharitable glare toward his boss, who had the faintest smile on his face as he counted his winnings. “So, how are you tonight?”

“I’m doing well, thanks. How about you?”

“Oh, you know,” Hitoshi replied. He glanced away and rubbed at the back of his neck, his scent belying his nervousness.


It had been nearly a year since Denki had first arrived in Cloud Bluff and met Hitoshi. The initial “how-do-you-do’s” whenever they talked were always a little on the awkward side, especially if Denki was working. But once they got past it, they could talk about anything and everything. Hitoshi was well-read, which surprised Denki—given his former career, he had expected the Alpha to be more of a “shoot first, ask questions later” type who didn’t care as much for things like reading.

“So, would you have some free time tomorrow? I’d like to take you out for a picnic.”

Denki couldn’t hold back a brilliant smile. “I’d like that very much.”

Hitoshi nodded in confirmation, biting his lip. The silver ring in his pocket weighed heavily on him—they hadn’t known each other that long and their first meeting had been on less than pleasant terms. He had no idea if Denki would even consider his offer, much less say yes. But he would never forgive himself if he didn’t at least try.

Mina walked up behind Denki and gave the two a knowing grin. “Denki, would you like to take a quick turn outside with our deputy here? As long as you stay within sight of the building, Katsuki can act as your chaperone.”



“Oh, really? Thank you, Mina!” She took the tray from his hands and shooed them off. Hitoshi held open the door for Denki to step outside, following behind him and tipping his hat to the blond guarding the entrance. Katsuki gave the slightest nod in return.

The moon was nearly full in the clear sky, giving them plenty of light to see by as they stepped into the quiet street. “It’s beautiful out tonight, isn’t it?” Denki asked. “I wish we could go out into the fields and catch fireflies. I haven’t been able to do that in ages.”

“Why not?” Hitoshi asked. “Was it not considered proper for a young Omega of society?”

“Pretty much. That and we were in the heart of the city. We hardly ever got to go to the park, and especially not at night.”

“I see. That’s a shame. You look beautiful in the moonlight.” The compliment slipped out before Hitoshi could stop his mouth from running on without him.

Denki’s cheeks flushed and he smacked Hitoshi gently on the chest. “Since when are you such a flatterer?” He pressed his hands to his cheeks, hoping to soothe the burn under his skin.

A moment of clarity washed over Hitoshi. It was now or never. They were far enough away from Katsuki that he could speak plainly and confess his feelings. He would bare his soul, lay his heart at Denki’s feet, and...he would accept whatever response he got.

Hitoshi replied, “Since I realized that I needed to step up and tell you how I feel before someone else snatches you away from me.” Denki nearly tripped at the words, looking up at Hitoshi— then down as he dropped to one knee. “Before I met you, I was a wanderer. I never felt like I belonged anywhere, never had a home. And then you came to Cloud Bluff, and like a bolt of lightning, you struck something inside me. And now I know my home is by your side.” Pulling out the ring, he held it up. “Would you do me the honor of letting me court you properly and someday becoming my mate?”

Denki’s mouth fell open at the earnest declaration. “Hitoshi... really? You want to court me?”

“More than anything.”

Blinking away tears, Denki nodded and threw his arms around Hitoshi’s neck. “Yes! Absolutely!” The sudden embrace knocked Hitoshi’s hat off his head, but he ignored it in favor of wrapping Denki up in his arms and lifting him off the ground. When he set the Omega back down, he took one of Denki’s hands in his to slide the ring onto his finger.

It was a perfect fit, the silver metal glimmering in the light of the moon. But in Hitoshi’s mind, Denki’s brilliant smile glowed even brighter.





WANDERING THOUGHTS ALWAYS GO BACK TO YOU

FANGIRLTAKA

Shinsou learned pretty early on in his life that when you have insomnia, nights could become boring fairly quickly. Tossing around in bed could only do so much to occupy the mind, and usually resulted in a groan and tired eyes staring at the ceiling with the faint hope that some piece of concrete would fall and knock him out.

Not ideal.


One would think, with so many hours of sleep lacking, that Shinsou at least made it productive and worked on his assignments, learned his lessons, did his chores, maybe tried to work on a side-project of some sort. But nooo, why would Shinsou be prolific when he can make procrastination a sport and surf the web like a zombie at unholy hours of the night?

So instead of doing anything really useful, Shinsou laid in bed snuggling Pixel, the white and orange Japanese bobtail cat he managed to smuggle in with Kaminari's help. His thumb slid on the screen of his phone, scrolling endlessly. No one was awake, so Twitter, Facebook, and Line remained pretty silent and soon were kind of repetitive. Reading the same messages and posts on and on wasn't as entertaining as some would've thought.

So he did what any teen with insomnia would do at 3 am with no sleep: he pulled up AO3.

How he found out about fanfiction was quite blurry, it had been so long ago. It was probably from one of those shady Pro Hero Forums he used to be a part of, where people speculate about Heroes' love life and often like to imagine themselves being the "chosen one." As far as he could remember, one of the first fanfictions he had read was about Present Mic and Eraserhead, which was definitely a weird and cringy thing to remember now that they were his literal teachers. But his interest in fanfiction never diminished and here he was, laying on his side in the dark room, his face lit up by the soft light of his phone screen, scrolling through paragraphs of carefully written romance between Hawks and Mirko.

Honestly, Shinsou could bet his quirk that the Number 2 Hero was as gay as Pride Month, but there was no denying that he and the Bunny Hero had chemistry. Or at least, the story he was



reading about it was pretty convincing, and he felt himself be captivated by the words. So captivated in fact, that it was over way too soon, his eyes already skipping over the author's notes.

He learned that a lot of people didn't really like to read the notes at the end of chapters and fics, but he personally thought that it was a good psychology training, trying to understand how much of the author really appears in the text. At least, that's what he tried to convince himself, because in reality, he was just a curious little shit and he knew it. A lazy smile curved his lips as he read about how the author was inspired by a picture of the two Pros from high school. His mind was starting to wander, pondering if someone would write fanfictions about Kaminari and himself when they graduate and go Pro? Honestly, it would be surprising, as he plans to be an underground hero, but Shinsou started reading fanfiction through fics about Present Mic and Eraserhead of all people.

That would be nice, feeling validated in his feelings towards the blonde by other people who thought they would look good together.

Gathering his thoughts back on the author's notes, he raised an interested eyebrow. Apparently the author had used some automatic prompt generator to come up with an idea, and without thinking much of it, Shinsou clicked on it to see what it was all about. A new tab in his navigator popped up, and he was brought to a blank page with nearly nothing on it, except two cases to fill with "Person A"'s name and "Person B"'s name. The website was apparently named "OTP prompt generator", and Shinsou held his breath. What if-


Before he had even finished the thought, his fingers — *the traitors* — were already putting in his and Kaminari's names, pausing for a second before clicking **Generate**.

"Shinsou and Kaminari getting matching tattoos"

Hitoshi snorted, that first prompt pretty innocent and cute. It wouldn't be hard, imagining Kaminari being overexcited by the concept of getting twin designs tattooed on their skin. The blonde would obviously be the one to come up with the idea and the drawing for it, maybe something with lightning in it because Kaminari was always putting it in everything. It doesn't really bother Shinsou, because it's pretty endearing. That prompt is pretty quickly swept aside though, because even though he would never admit it, Hitoshi had such a low pain tolerance he probably wouldn't be able to go through with it. Chuckling to himself, he clicked **Generate** again.

"Kaminari and Shinsou burning something together"

Well, Shinsou thought as he idly caressed the soft fur of his cat, this had already happened



so it was pretty easy to imagine. Though it was probably not in the way the prompt intended, they had burnt down part of the kitchen and had to call Todoroki in to help extinguish it. Honestly, it still boggled Shinsou's mind how Kaminari did that to the spaghetti, since he was pretty sure it shouldn't even be possible in the first place. It was a fun afternoon nonetheless, trying to work together to cook something, and the domesticity of it had Hitoshi's heart squeezing in his chest. Damn, he really was whipped for the blonde, if he could even forgive him nearly killing him with *spaghetti*.


Focusing on the prompt again, the man smiled. Burning something could be very poetic, whether it be old papers with bad grades, or candles for a romantic dinner. Either way, Shinsou idly thought, Denki's eyes would be really pretty bathed in the orange hue of the flames. Fire dancing in his eyes, his bright smile lighting up his face, and maybe they would be holding hands? Hitoshi's own hand squeezed the sheets and he mourned the fact that he couldn't feel warm skin instead.

He sighed, fighting the urge to pout, letting his mind wander a final time, the idea of a candlelight dinner with Denki being pretty appealing. He hummed, lost in thoughts before he went back to his device, clicking **Generate** once again.

"Kaminari and Shinsou go to an amusement park and Kaminari wants to go on the roller coaster and Shinsou agrees. Later, Shinsou regrets their decision and ends up clinging to Kaminari for dear life"

This time, Hitoshi has to repress a laugh, for the sake of Pixel who's sound asleep curled up beside him. This prompt was so accurate it made Shinsou giddy, wide smile curling on his lips. He can totally imagine that one, Denki looking up at him with his big puppy eyes, bouncing on his feet with excitement and pleading for Shinsou to join him in a ride that would have way too many loops for the man's taste. But he's always been weak to Kaminari, especially when the short blonde pouted at him, and eventually he would agree. Hitoshi's smile grew wider, easily picturing how the rest of the date would go. He hated roller coasters, he preferred the quieter attractions, such as the glass maze. But it wasn't hard to imagine Denki being eager to try such a thing, seeing as he was an adrenaline junkie. Shinsou was imagining himself, sitting beside the blonde, waiting for his impending death while the ride went up and up and up.

He could almost feel it: the drop in his stomach, the tightening in his chest, the wind whistling in his ears. Clinging to Denki's hand, screaming at the top of his lungs, and of course the blonde would be absolutely delighted. Maybe it would even be his plan from the start, getting Hitoshi into a ride he doesn't like so he would hold tight onto the electric boy



Even though it didn't actually happen, Hitoshi tried to plan a hypothetical revenge. Ever since the School Festival, he knew that Denki was easily scared in haunted houses. If he could get the blonde to follow him into one, he's pretty sure he would be able to get back at him and have Kaminari hide in his chest.

That was a nice thought, one that made him hum happily in his bed, staring longingly at his screen.

Fuck, he had it bad didn't he, using the prompt generator with both his and his crush's names. He wishes he was confident enough to actually ask the cute blonde on a date instead of day-dreaming about scenarios that would never happen. He checks the time, 3:47 am, and ponders whether or not he should try to sleep. But the idea of another cute prompt with Denki was appealing, and he found his thumb pressing **Generate**.

*"Shinsou: What are you gonna do?? Taze me??
Shinsou : *gets tazed*"*

It took a few seconds for his brain to understand what was written, and when it did it brought a loud laugh to bubble up and spill from Hitoshi's lips. Pixel woke up with a start, obviously pretty upset that she got disturbed from her sleep. But Shinsou didn't really care, not when that prompt seemed made for Denki and him, not when it made him so happy he didn't think twice before screenshotting it and sending it to Kaminari, along with a text saying "This is so accurate it's scary."

Even though he knew the blonde had insomnia because of his quirk, he wasn't really expecting a reply at this time of the night. And yet, after not even a minute, his phone pinged with a notification from Denki.

[From : Sparky

Holy shIT dude, that's totally something we would do lmao]

This message made Shinsou realize his mistake. He had sent a prompt to Denki. And now that Kaminari had seen it and acknowledged it, it was too late to somehow salvage the impending disaster. All that was left to do now, was praying to whatever god was listening that the blonde wouldn't ask what the website was, because then he would have to explain it, and then the implications of exactly why he was using a generator made for fanfics with their names would be clear and-

His thoughts got interrupted by his phone pinged again, another message from Denki con-





firming his fear.

[From : Sparky

Where did you get that though dude? Is it one of those meme generators? That sounds lit!]

Of course. Hitoshi should've seen it coming, should've been more careful before sending this to Denki. The blonde was known for being curious, so it should've been obvious that he would ask where he got the picture from.

For a moment, Shinsou contemplated leaving Kaminari on read, feigning sleep, and avoiding the matter altogether. But his crush was nothing if persistent, and he would come back later in the morning, this time making sure Hitoshi wouldn't avoid him. He groaned, rolling in his bed. He was fucked.

[To : Sparky

Yeah, something like that.]

Maybe being vague would work. He desperately hoped it would, looking at his phone, anxiety bubbling up in his chest. He didn't need Denki to figure out how much of a creep he was, using a website made for fanfics to get just a tiny crumb of fantasy. Damn, now he felt pathetic.

After a few minutes of Denki not replying, Hitoshi told himself that maybe the blonde fell asleep, sparing him from further embarrassment. His own sleep seemed to be compromised however, his brain running several miles per hour with anxiety and stress. He knew he wouldn't be able to sleep tonight, and so he resigned himself. He will be spending his night on his back, staring at the ceiling, doing the very thing he was trying to avoid by reading fanfiction and using the prompts website. Fuck.

He spent a few minutes like that, his chest tight, wondering if he ruined his already nonexistent chances with Denki. After all, despite everyone saying otherwise, Hitoshi knew the blonde was smart and would figure out exactly where the picture came from. Pixel must have sensed that her Master was upset, softly nudging his cheek with her head, trying to lift his mood up.

They both jumped when his phone pinged once again, and suddenly dread settled in Shinsou's stomach, because the only one that could possibly text him right now was Denki. And if he was being honest, he didn't really want to explain everything to Kaminari right now. But as always when it came to the electric boy, Hitoshi was weak, and he grabbed his phone, unlock-



it and pulling up his line conversation with the blonde.

[From : Sparky

Attached Image : Screenshot_2030-43-05-20-27]

[From : Sparky

What would you say if I asked you to make that one a reality?]

In the picture, another prompt, from the same website Shinsou had been using for the last hour, a prompt that made his heart beat hard and fast, and his breath catch in his throat.

“Kaminari and Shinsou dancing in the moonlight”

Just like it did for the fateful prompt he sent Kaminari, his brain stalled, struggling to link the picture before his eyes and the message Denki linked to it. Make that one a reality?

Maybe he was dreaming, maybe he fell asleep despite all the odds against it. But when he pinched his forearm, all he felt was pain, and the messages were still staring back at him from his screen. His second theory was that it was an elaborate prank, but he knew this kind of joke wasn't the blonde's thing, that he wouldn't play with someone's feelings like that. And that was all it took for the tired teen to spur into action, jumping out of his bed in nothing but his pajamas. He ran down the hall, up the stairs, to the spot on the roof he knew Denki liked to chill at when he couldn't sleep.


His heart was beating frantically in his chest, anticipation making his body heat up. Opening the door, he was met with a shock of bright blonde hair. Denki was blushing, avoiding his gaze and awkwardly playing with his own fingers. The moonlight wrapped him in a blue halo, and all Hitoshi could think was how breathtaking his crush looked like in the night. Their eyes met, uncertain gold with incredulous amethyst, and Shinsou knew what he had to do.

“Yeah. Yes, I'd want that.”

And suddenly, the anxiety, the stress, the embarrassment, everything was worth it, for Kaminari's entire face lit up with relief and excitement, a bright smile greeting Shinsou's own uncertain one.

“For real?!”

“Yes. Although I wonder how you found out what site I was using-”



“It’s easy enough. There was a signature on the screenshot, just had to Google the name, it brought me to the site. An OTP Prompt generator, huh?”

Hitoshi felt himself blushing from head to toe, and he made some sort of strangled sound. For once in his life, he was at a loss of words.

“Yeah, well, uh, yeah.”

“Very eloquent Shinsou.” Denki stepped closer, his previous nervousness apparently disappeared the moment Hitoshi said yes to his proposition. There was a mischievous glint in his pretty eyes, and Shinsou lost himself in them. “Would you happen to have a crush on me?”

As if under his own quirk, Hitoshi found himself nodding slowly, murmuring a soft “yes” under his breath, unable to take his eyes off of the blonde’s perfect eyes, perfect cheeks, perfect smile, perfect lips-

“Good, because me too.”

Before Shinsou could react Denki was kissing him, a soft press of their lips that made butterflies take off in Hitoshi’s stomach, and his heart beat faster. The blonde took one of his hands, sliding the other around his waist. When they parted, Kaminari started humming, looking right into Shinsou’s violet eyes before he made them take two steps back, then three forth, and back again. It wasn’t a real waltz, just swaying around, their feet a bit clumsy. But to Shinsou it was perfect, Denki’s head pressed against his chest as his voiced lulled them in a slow dance under the moonlight.

Could it be called a date? Hitoshi liked to think so, squishing his cheek to a tuft of blonde hair and looking up to the quarter moon. If this was a date, this was the most perfect first date ever, and he wanted for it to never end. Denki seemed to agree, as he squeezed around Shinsou with his arm.

“Your heart is beating really fast.”

“Can you blame me? I have you in my arms after all.”

“Damn Shinsou, that was smooth.”

“Heh, I guess. Not as smooth as the move you pulled on me though.”

“Ah, yeah, maybe. I was kind of nervous you’d turn me down.”



“Never.”

Shinsou made the blonde spin, earning an airy laugh and a smile that made Hitoshi weak in his knees. Kaminari really was gorgeous in the moonlight, and it cemented the teen’s desire to get more moments like that. His amethyst eyes searched for gold hues once again, looking into them and finding nothing but affection.

“I’ll take you to an Amusement Park for our next date.”

He tried not to sound too hopeful, not wanting to get his hopes up. But as always, Denki eased his worries.

“Was that one of your prompts? I’d love that.”

And Hitoshi smiled, humming a low tune in Denki’s hair and making them sway around again. He couldn’t wait to get in a roller coaster with the blonde. And then, maybe he’d show him the haunted house.

Yeah. he couldn’t wait.





HOPELESS HOTEL FRAPPI

You would think that being a hero would get you all that you wanted in life, right? That couldn't be further from the truth for Kaminari Denki. Don't get it wrong, Denki loved being a hero, seeing the faces of those he saved and getting to even work with amazing people was great, but he was a social butterfly being trapped in a boring life cycle. Work, Eat, Sleep, Repeat. So, when he got a text from Mina to meet up and talk about a hero's vacation trip, he was more than excited to join in.

"Oh man, I can't wait for this trip! It's gonna be so great to just relax for a bit" Denki said as he sat at a table for lunch with his friends; Mina, Sero, Kirishima, Bakugo, and Jirou.

"Yeah, you said it. I can already feel my elbows starting to strain with how much I've had to use them, Sero added, stretching his arms and holding his elbows as well.

"If you wanted a massage you should have said so sweetie," Mina said, going to rub his elbows.

"Gross, get a room you two!" Bakugo said, giving them both a disgusted look.


"We will at the hotel!" Mina retorted

"You know, it was pretty cool of our agencies to let us go on this trip as it is. Me and YaoMomo definitely can't wait for the peace and quiet" Jirou said as she twirled her earjacks around her finger.

"Just don't get a room next to Bakugo, otherwise you'll be up all night" Denki added, to which Bakugo flipped him off.

"Yeah, and it probably would be best for us to get a room next to you since, well you're not with anyone," Sero said. Mina flicked her finger against his nose as a sign to stop it. Denki went silent. He wasn't expecting that to come from Sero, but he was right though. He hadn't really been with anyone since Jirou towards the end of their third year. Everyone must have felt the shift in tone and sat there awkwardly for a moment.

"Hey, it's fine Kaminari, we understand if you haven't met someone new yet, we're not gonna



judge,” Kirishima spoke up, putting a hand onto his shoulder. Denki wanted to smile, say it’s fine, but the comment stuck to him more than he thought.

“Actually,” he went to move his hand and turn to Sero “I’m bringing someone with me.” This made everyone turn their head towards him in shock, especially Jirou.

“Oh yeah, that’s great!” Sero smiled. “Who is it?” Denki’s heart jumped out of his chest and his eyes went wide, completely forgetting that important detail. His mind went blank, only saying ‘uhh’ and ‘well’ over and over again. He turned his head to look around and noticed a Television in the café they were at was playing a recap of recent hero stories. On the screen was a hero with purple hair and a scarf similar to their old sensei’s and a mask over his face. He couldn’t mistake who that was though.

“Shinsou. I’m going with Shinsou”

“Shinsou? You mean sensei’s old teacher’s pet?” Mina asked for clarification. Denki nodded and smiled.

“You’re so full of shit,” Bakugo said as he went to drink from his drink. Kirishima slapped his arm and gave him a scowl “What? I’m serious. You think this twink got with that troll hair doll all of a sudden?”

“Well, it’s the truth,” Denki said. Sero and Kirishima seemed thrilled that Denki was able to get a guy, but everyone else seemed skeptical or didn’t pay mind to it much further.

They spent the rest of their time together talking about the things they would do on the trip, all of which Denki decided to not pay much mind to. He was too busy thinking about how he was gonna ask Shinsou to come with him on the trip. Before long, the group parted ways and Denki went home for the night.



Denki spent the whole night coming up with a way to get Shinsou to come on the trip with him. He thought about maybe paying a visit to his agency and seeing if he’d want to join, but that probably would be awkward. Maybe if he slid into his DM’s that could work, but that would also make him seem desperate.

“Damnit Denki, think!” Denki said to himself out loud as he flopped onto his couch, scrolling through his feed. He saw fans retweeting his most recent modeling picture for some brand he already forgot he was promoting. That was until he saw some ‘breaking news’ appear on one of



the news outlet's twitter.

‘Pro Hero, Mind Control, breaks up with Phantom Thief’

Oh. That's news for sure. Denki was curious, scrolling through the story as he read what the report had to say. It was a normal case of falling out of love, but the comments under the story said another thing.


‘Phantom Thief was totally cheating on him with Welder’

‘Oh??? The tea!’

‘Wow, who would be so dumb as to cheat on the one guy who would make you spill the truth?’

Denki couldn't believe the comments, thinking it had to be fabricated, but then his phone started blowing up with texts from his friends. Some of them were from Mina, who was calling him out for 'knowing about the tea' the whole time. Some of them were from Kirishima, asking if he knew about it and wanted to talk.


He texted them all back, saying he had no clue in the whole thing. He looked back at the twitter and thought to himself 'There's probably no way that he'd want to go on the trip now, not with something like this going on'. He put his phone down for the night and went to sleep, dreaming about the possibility of Shinsou maybe going on the trip.



A week passed and the trip was already here, faster than Denki thought it would be. He didn't even get the chance to message Shinsou at all, as a friend supporting him, or even for the trip. He figured it was for the best if he wasn't going, he'd just have to face his friends as a forever alone man.

He was boarding a bus that most of the other heroes were gonna use to get up to the resort. They really went out for this trip, but what do you expect when it's being paid for by Shouto Todoroki. He got onto the bus and looked at the sea of people on it, looking at all the familiar faces, but not one that he wanted to see.

“Hey, Kaminari,” a deep voice said as he passed by the first three rows of the bus. He turned his head around and saw purple messy hair behind him in one of the seats near the front “You wanna sit with me?” he asked. *Really? Shinsou wanted him to sit with him?* Denki nodded his head and moved to sit next to him, watching people walk in and find their seats on the bus.



“Hey, Shinsou. This is kind of a surprise. I wasn’t expecting you to be on this trip.” Denki said, putting his bag down under the seat.

“Yeah, well I wouldn’t but someone said that you were going and I figured if you were there it’d be a little enjoyable” Shinsou said as he rubbed the back of his neck, a hint of pink on his cheeks. Denki turned around to see who all was there and he made eye contact with Kirishima, arm around Bakugo. He gave Denki a wink and then turned his attention away to talk with everyone else surrounding them. Huh, go figure.

“So, I guess that means you don’t have a roommate to bunk with do you?” Denki asked as he sat back in his seat.

“No, not really,” Shinsou said as he looked out the window. He looked so handsome and broody, but there’s no way he can just say it to his face though.

“Well, I don’t have a roommate yet, do you wanna you know, bunk with me?” Denki asked with a cheeky smile. Shinsou turned back to him and gave him a blank expression.

“If it means what I think it means, I want none of it,” Shinsou said a bit harshly.

“What do you mean by that?”

“I mean like...anything romantic. I don’t think I can do any of that right now” Shinsou looked down at his lap and was messing with his ear. He looked pretty serious and Denki thought for a moment.

“Well I don’t see a problem with being in a room with a friend for the weekend, what about you?” Denki asked. Shinsou looked down at him and huffed in response.

“Just a friend?”

“Yeah, just a friend. You know we can treat it like a sleepover. Sneak in some snacks, make a blanket fort, watch movies late at night.”

“You mean forget the whole trip and just hang out in a hotel room as two available, single gay men?”

“First off, I’m bisexual, and second off, you know you want to hang out with me,” Denki said with a small punch to his shoulder.



“You’re not planning on stopping this, are you?” Shinsou asked as he gave a smirk and folded his arms.

“Nope. Either you bunk with me, or get bunked with someone who’ll bore you the whole weekend.” Denki gave him a smile and Shinsou rolled his eyes at him.

“Fine, but I’m pretty sure you’ll bore me as well,” Shinsou said sarcastically, pulling out a pair of headphones from his pocket and connecting them to his phone. Denki was about to do the same to his own phone, but Shinsou tapped his shoulder, offering him an earbud to listen to. He smiled and placed it in his ear, listening to a mix of punk rock and alternative music.




It took about a couple of hours for the bus to get to their destination. A resort on top of one of the best mountains in Japan. It was very beautiful and one of the best sights to see. Halfway through the trip, Shinsou fell asleep listening to his music, his head slipping to rest on Denki’s shoulder. It was cute, and something he wasn’t expecting from a guy like him. The bus pulled to a stop and Shinsou woke up instantly, wiping his tired eyes.

“Morning, Sleeping Beauty,” Denki joked as he took the headphone out of his ear. “Yeah, morning...I guess,” Shinsou replied with a yawn. He put the headphones and phone away as the bus started to unload, everyone stretching as they got off. Everyone was issued inside and the rooms divided up according to who booked with who, or in Denki and Shinsou’s case, who was left. They were offered the last room that was booked on the roster. Shinsou stared at the room details and he started to look agitated, going to the front desk.

“Are you joking?! You only have single bed rooms left?!” Shinsou asked the front desk clerk. He clenched his hand into a fist and sighed heavily. The lady at the front desk was told to book rooms for people who were couples, that everyone going was only going to need one bed per room. It wasn’t like they couldn’t ask for another room, considering that the hotel had limited space.

“Shinsou, it’ll be fine, like I said, we can make a blanket fort or if you want, we can alternate who sleeps where,” Denki said as he picked up his things and the key for the room. He didn’t know why Shinsou was so against sharing a room, let alone a bed, with him. Then again, he did just come out of a relationship that ended pretty badly.

“Yeah, whatever...Sorry ma’am” he said as he followed Denki, grabbing his bags.



They both took to the elevator and spent the ride up in silence. Denki wanted to ask what was so bad about sharing a room, or moreover, a bed with him, but he didn't know how to ask. The elevator dinged and they walked down the hall, making it to the room. Denki opened the door and revealed a large spacious room with a queen-sized bed and a couch near their bedroom window. In the other room is a bathroom, big enough to hold at least five people in it. "See, it'll be fine if you wanna sleep on the bed one night, and then we switch off," Denki said as he set his bags near the front door. Shinsou hummed silently as he looked at the gift that was on the counter in their little kitchen. A bouquet of roses and a champagne bottle with flutes to match. He scuffed and turned away from the gift.

Shinsou put his bags down next to Denki's and went to sit on the bed. He pulled out the remote for the TV from the bedside drawer and turned it on. He was flipping through channels while Denki moved to view the gift. He looked at the letter attached to the gift, seeing that it was issued for '*the happy couple*'. I guess it wasn't a properly timed gift, now that he thought about it. He stared at the gift, lost in his own thoughts of what it would have been like if Monoma was here instead of Denki.

"Hey, Kaminari, you ok over there?" Shinsou asked, snapping Denki out of his thoughts
"Oh ummm yeah...I'm fine"


"Ok then, what did I just say?"

"Ummmm.." Denki didn't know what to say, looking at Shinsou blankly
"I said if you want to, you can sit on the bed with me"

Denki looked at him a little shocked, but he took him up on the offer anyway. He moved to the other side of Shinsou and sat on the bed, head against the backboard with a little bit of space between him and Shinsou. He had it on some movie where the main girl has to find her true love before midnight. Denki didn't care. He was too busy thinking about Shinsou still. Before his thoughts were lost again, he felt a hand move behind his head and bring him closer to Shinsou. The scent of strong coffee and rain was on the shirt Denki's nose was currently occupying. While under normal circumstances, he'd be nervous to do this, trembling at the thought of someone as handsome as Shinsou getting this close to him, but he's not. He's even more confused than before, eyebrows scrunching as he pulled back from the embrace to look at him.

"I don't think we can do this," Denki said.

"What's wrong? I thought you'd want to cuddle or something?" Shinsou asked, turning down the volume on the tv.



“Ugh, can we not talk about this? I’ve been dealing with it all week and I just want to relax for one weekend without thinking of that guy,” Shinsou huffed out, throwing his head back against a pillow and covering his face with his hands.

Denki sat there in silence, trying to think of what he was going to say, but he couldn’t. Instead, he had a thought. He got up from the bed and headed for the closet the hotel room had, looking for pillows and blankets. He grabbed what he could and came back to the bed, issuing Shinsou to get up.

“What are you doing?” he asked

“What does it look like? I’m making a blanket fort.”

“You were serious about that?” Shinsou asked as he saw Denki go to work making the fort look...surprisingly good.

“Of course I was, I never joke about this kind of stuff,” Denki said as he put the finishing touches on the fort, pulling out battery powered fairy lights and having them drape over the fort. He turned them on and it lit the room with small yellowish lights that looked like the stars. Shinsou moved to turn off the main lights and they glowed brighter than normal. A smile was plastered on Denki’s face as Shinsou came up next to him.

“Well, I guess if you’re serious about this, then we need some snacks and a better movie to watch then,” Shinsou said.



The two of them went on the hunt for some snacks, getting as much as they could from the resort’s little cafe. Denki had already had some snacks himself, but they weren’t enough for the both of them. They came back to the room and Shinsou found a movie that was both funny and adventurous. They watched the movie and ate their snacks and they were both having a good time.

“I don’t think I’ve had this much fun with anyone in so long,” Shinsou said with a smile. Denki looked up at him and gave him a smile back. However, that didn’t last long as Shinsou’s phone started to ring. His face turned from happy to that of disgust. He shut it off and tossed the phone aside, falling back on the bed.



“What was that about?” Denki asked, concerned about what that was about.

“It’s nothing...just that guy again...probably begging me to come back,” Shinsou said with a bit of sadness in his voice. Denki shut the movie off and laid back against the bed beside him, staring up at the blankets.

“Can I ask what happened?” Denki questioned after a moment of silence.

“It’s just...He expects me to not be mad because he decided that he wanted to have a little fun!” Shinsou exclaimed. “How am I not supposed to be mad at the fact that he cheated on me! I even saw it coming and didn’t do anything about it!”

“That really sucks,” Denki said, laying there with his hands on his side. He wanted to take Shinsou’s hand in his own, comfort him, but he didn’t know if it was the right time to do that. “Yeah, it does, even after I spent so long trying to fix it...I wish I had just broken up with him back in high school, asked out the real person I liked,” Shinsou blurted out before slamming his hand against his mouth.


“What do you mean by that?” Denki sat up now, eyebrows arched in question. Shinsou looked away and rolled over to face the other way. He knew deep down that he probably had some feelings for him, after all he had the same feelings as well. However, he wasn’t going to push it.

“Fine, but so you know, whoever you’re talking about, they probably liked you too.” Denki rolled over to face the other way, having both their backs to each other. A shift in the bed made Denki aware that Shinsou had turned around and the feeling of a hand resting on his shoulder confirmed that.

“You know who I’m talking about, or are you just making an assumption?” Shinsou asked. Denki sat up, feeling how close the two of them really were to each other. He could feel his body start to shake as he looked down.

“I think so,” Denki said softly. Shinsou’s hand moved Denki’s chin up to face him and before he knew it, their lips were pressed against each other. He could feel his heart race in his chest and cheeks flush red as Shinsou went to deepen the kiss a little. They kissed for what felt like minutes before they pulled apart, breathless.

“I’ve wanted to do that for a while now,” Shinsou said with a sigh of relief. Denki went to crack a smile, moving to kiss him back while his arms wrapped around his neck. Shinsou’s arms wrapped around his waist as they kissed again. Before they could do anything more en-



“Hey! Kaminairi, Shinsou, you guys coming down for stargazing or not?” Kirishima’s voice asked from behind the door. The two of them looked at each other for a second and started to laugh a little.

“Uhh yeah, we’ll be there in a second” Shinsou replied, getting up off the bed and looking for his shoes. They got their shoes on and made their way to the door, meeting up with a bunch of their friends as they made their way up to the rooftop. Blankets and pillows were placed about as everyone went to find a spot to watch the stars.

“Hey, let’s sit over there,” Denki said, pointing to a place off to the side from everyone else. Shinsou nodded his head and they both made their way over there. Once everyone was seated, the lights on the roof went off and everyone ‘ohh’ and ‘ahh’ as the stars lit up the sky like a scene in a movie.

“You know, under different circumstances, this would be pretty romantic,” Shinsou said as his arm moved over Denki’s shoulders.

“Well, I mean it can be romantic. It doesn’t have to be instant, like right now, but it can be,” Denki said, leaning his head on Shinsou’s shoulder.

“Yeah, that sounds pretty good,” Shinsou replied. He lifted Denki’s head up to face him again, gently kissing his lips before stopping and smiling. They both smiled at each other as shooting stars started streaming across the sky. Both Shinsou and Denki watched as the stars danced across the night sky, eventually falling asleep in each other’s arms, both hopeful for a future together.



A BARD STORY

SONA "GOO" XAVIER

"Hey there, I'm Denki Kaminari!" He holds out his hand as people load the carts around them. "You're my buddy for this trip, right?" The feather in his hat bounces as Hitoshi blinks at him, staring down at the leather glove. He doesn't reach out to shake the man's hand. When a few moments pass where nothing happens, Kaminari drops his hand and laughs. "Not a handshake guy, got it!" His laughter is bright and feels like a physical wash of magic.

Hitoshi covers up his shiver quickly enough as a young man at the head of the group starts clapping his hands together. A few people jump at the loud claps, and Hitoshi watches the man's tiny form expertly climb the cart. His body language doesn't match the muscles or scars Hitoshi can see peeking out from beneath his sleeves. This green haired man, who looks a harsh breeze away from falling apart, is a seasoned adventurer.

"Can everyone hear me?" He calls out, and a few people whistle.

Kaminari is one of them, yanking off one of his gloves to put his fingers in his mouth. His hand doesn't stay bare long, but it's exposed long enough for Hitoshi to see vicious scars that web around his fingers. They remind him of sand on the beach after a lightning strike.


"That's great!" The man with the green hair starts talking again, so Hitoshi turns his back to him. "It's so good to see some of you again, and even better to see all these new faces!" His laughter is very soft, but he looks genuine enough. "So, I guess we should go over some rules first?"

"Get this over with, Deku!" A voice shouts from the second cart before Hitoshi hears something clatter.

"Bakubro, don't throw stuff!" Someone else shouts. There's a tussle that Hitoshi only spares a glance at, seeing red and blond trade easily swiped away punches.

"Guys, come on." Kaminari calls out, bright laughter in his voice. "Let Zuzu talk." Hitoshi raises an eyebrow at the man, who shrugs. "Zuzu's shy." Kaminari explains.

Hitoshi turns back to the man standing on top of the cart, who is beet red and muttering to himself as he tugs at his sleeves. Kaminari hums, suddenly too close for Hitoshi's liking as he bends down to pick up the feed for some of the horses.



A moment passes when Kaminari just holds the feed bag, sunlight glinting off his blond hair and little belts. Hitoshi takes a second to realize that he hasn't figured out where this guy's weapon is.

"Deku!" The abrasive voice from before barks the name, or maybe the nickname, and the green haired man fumbles his hands and squeaks.

"Right!" The man starts describing the adventure they'd all signed up for, and Hitoshi drowns him out as he turns to pick up his pack. He knows all of this already. Unlike most people, he actually reads the contracts before he signs them.

"Where you going, dude?" Kaminari asks, still holding the bag of feed. It's got to be getting heavy, he knows those... aren't light. Where is he hiding all that muscle?

Hitoshi points to the back of the group, and Kaminari puts the bag on the back of the cart. There's a wrinkle between his eyes. He opens his mouth, then shuts it. Hitoshi knows he wants to ask 'why,' but he won't.

"Alright! Everybody stick close to your buddy!" Deku-Zuzu calls, and Hitoshi tries not to roll his eyes. This isn't the kind of mission that you need a buddy for. They're just guarding a few carts full of supplies to the outer reaches and escorting a bunch of barbarians home. This isn't difficult. This is just to pass the time until a real adventure comes along.

Hitoshi walks to the back of the group, intent on doing his job, but Kaminari scrambles to follow after him. Apparently he's serious about sticking to the buddy system. Of course.

"Hey, you're a Rogue right? That's why you're going to the back?" Kaminari asks, shoving his gloved thumbs into the top of his belt. "I knew a really cool rogue, well, I mean, I still know her." He laughs and shrugs. "She went with the other half of the party when we-"

Hitoshi sucks in a breath and yanks down the mask that covers his mouth. "Kaminari." He says the name and his voice cracks from disuse.

"Oh! I didn't know you actually spoke, I was about to break out the sign language. What's up?" Kaminari seems to bounce in place.

"What color is the sky?" Hitoshi asks. Kaminari looks at him with a confused smile.

"Well it's blue, wh-" He doesn't finish his sentence, his whole body relaxing as Hitoshi reaches out with his magic and grips it tightly around Kaminari's mind. He's about to issue the com-



mand ‘Go hang out at the front,’ when he feels a knife press into the side of his neck.

He didn’t even feel the person walk up behind him, but he can feel rage pouring off them like heat. “I suggest you let whatever spell you just cast go.” The voice is familiar, but far angrier than when he’d first heard it. Hitoshi places it as the one that had shouted at the man heckling the leader of the group. The redhead.

Hitoshi glances back and sees veins of fire blooming across the man’s skin near his eyes.

Not a man then.

A dragon.

He drops his spell without another thought.

Kaminari blinks and shakes his head, his body full of life again. The redhead removes his knife from Hitoshi’s neck, but it repositions behind him and settles behind his kidney.

“You okay, Denks?” The dragon asks, genuine concern in his tone.

“Oh man, Kiri! Am I ever!” Kaminari laughs, bright like the sun and just as cheerful. “Dude, you’ll have to teach me that spell!” The enthusiasm makes the dragon hum and remove the knife. “Right, Kiri, this is my buddy! Uh... actually, I don’t know his name.” He laughs again, rubbing the back of his neck. “I forgot to ask.”


Kiri laughs. “You would.” He says fondly. “Well, either way, don’t lag too far behind if you two are going to be at the back. Bakubro really wants to get home.”

“Right!” Kaminari waves as the dragon walks away, and Hitoshi finally breathes again. Kaminari watches the dragon go, then turns to Hitoshi. His face is much softer. “Hey, you okay?”

Hitoshi blinks at him in surprise. “I’m... fine.”

Kaminari smiles, much easier than his others had been. He seems genuine, and Hitoshi realizes that the bright, bubbling attitude was a perfectly structured mask that Kaminari wore so well that Hitoshi hadn’t even seen the seams.

His whole life is about rooting out the liars from the crowd, but here Kaminari Denki is, barreling through like it’s not the biggest deal to fool a Rogue.



“Good.” Kaminari says. “I’m sorry about Kiri, he’s just... protective after our last adventure.” He shrugs and rubs at his shoulder. Hitoshi can tell there’s an injury there, or a past one, but he doesn’t bring it up. “Anyway, what was that spell? Tell me about it?”

Hitoshi inhales, deep and slow. He wants to put his mask back on, to blend into the shadows and live the rest of this trip out in silence. But... they’re all moving forward. He takes a step and puts a hand on his whip.

Kaminari follows at his side with a grin, the feather in his hat twisting with the wind. “It’s a Command spell.” Hitoshi tells him, then coughs to clear his throat. Kaminari makes a concerned noise, but Hitoshi shakes his head. “All my spells are verbal, but I try to only use them as a last resort.” He coughs the last word out and is surprised when Kaminari yanks his water skin off his belt to thrust it into Hitoshi’s hand.

“Dude, then why aren’t you taking care of your voice?” Kaminari won’t let up until Hitoshi takes a swig. He isn’t expecting apple juice and he nearly spits it out laughing, but he takes it anyway. Not exactly a good idea for a sore throat, or to keep hydrated, but it’s... very Kaminari. From all that he’s known him for, which makes a grand total of ten minutes.

“It’s a weapon.” Hitoshi says as he corks the water skin. “People are afraid of answering me because of it.”

He expects the normal scoff or the distance, but he isn’t expecting Kaminari to pout. “That’s dumb.” He decides. “Sure, it’s powerful, but it’s your voice, dude. You should be proud of that, weapon or not.” He smiles and gently bumps their shoulders as they walk.

Hitoshi feels a shiver travel up his spine, but it isn’t one of disgust. It’s more like... he doesn’t want to say butterflies. He doesn’t get butterflies. But...

“Where’s your weapon?” He asks instead. “It can’t just be these tiny knives, where’s your rapier?” He looks pointedly at Kaminari’s hip.

“Why would I carry a rapier?” Kaminari asks with laughter ready in his voice. “I’m a Bard, yeah, but not that kind of Bard. My power is... kind of in my voice too, but more in tricks and elements. Like this!” He waves his fingers around, then looks confused. “Oh, shit, right, I’m wearing gloves.” He fumbles to pull one off and Hitoshi can’t help himself.

He laughs.

Kaminari pauses in their walk, then hurries to catch up as a smile eases onto his face. “Wow,”



He sounds really smitten, “your laugh is beautiful.” He decides. Hitoshi yanks his mask up to cover his cheeks.

He’s not blushing, but... just in case.

“Anyway! I specialize in lightning.” Kaminari lifts his hand and several crackles curl around his fingers. “Mom was a bard, dad was a storm wizard, you know the whole thing.” He shrugs and shakes his hand off. When he does, the scars make much more sense. “What about you, what are your parents like?”

Hitoshi sighs. It’s pretty obvious that Kaminari is one of those guys that prefers to fill the silences rather than soak them in. “Ranger and a Banshee.” He mutters.

“That’s so cool!” Kaminari pumps his fist and hurries to catch up with Hitoshi’s quickened pace.



Kaminari talks... so much. Hitoshi had thought he’d wear himself out, but oh no, he just... keeps going. The sun is going down, and Hitoshi is so exhausted just from trying to keep up with Kaminari in conversation. He isn’t a social butterfly, but he’s polite.

“Alright, we’re going to make camp!” Someone shouts ahead of them. Hitoshi slumps and drops right where he is.

Kaminari laughs. “Dude, you okay?” He asks. “Don’t you want to set up a tent near the fire before you crash?”

Hitoshi lays back in the grass and grunts. “Tired.” He states. His throat is also sore and this has got to be the most he’s spoken in months, if not years. He closes his eyes and listens to the shuffle of feet all around them. There’s a tent on the back of his bag, but that’s resting against his hip as he lays flat.

The smell of grass is very strong this close to the ground.

That’s when the sudden realization hits him that Kaminari is quiet, too quiet. His eyes snap open as he sits bolt upright, looking around in a sudden, unexplained panic. After a few seconds, all that fear washes out of him when he sees Kaminari talking to an old woman as she stands by what will soon be the fire. He’s talking fast, both with his mouth and with his hands.



Right, he mentioned that he knew sign language.

Hitoshi yawns suddenly and thumps back into the grass, letting his mind drift off. He's safe in this group, if a little out of his depth, but he doesn't have to keep his guard that high up.

He's not sure how long he naps, but a soft hand on his shoulder wakes him. For a second he has a hand on his dagger, but then Kaminari's voice rests against his nerves.

"Just me." He says, and that signature laughter hides in the words. Hitoshi opens his eyes and sees that Kaminari has two steaming cups held to his chest, along with a tray full of food, "Sorry about waking you up, but I figured you'd want something to eat first, and maybe some tea for your throat?"

It's then that Hitoshi realizes the moon is out, and Kaminari is whispering. People are still awake in groups around them, but where Hitoshi dropped is cool and quiet.

He sits up properly and accepts the tray first, setting it between them, then the tea. It smells like honey, looks golden and smooth too. Hitoshi wraps both hands around the mug and pulls it beneath his chin, inhaling deeply. It's crisp, smells like apples but also warmth. Hitoshi's reminded of Kaminari's flask.

For some reason, it makes him smile. He quickly hides it behind the mug as he sips at the tea, letting it soak into his throat.

He notices that Kaminari's not talking anymore, just smiling as he picks through the food on the tray and sits close. He's shivering a little, and Hitoshi raises an eyebrow. He shouldn't be cold in that tailcoat.

"What's wrong?" Hitoshi can't help but ask. Kaminari blinks in surprise, a wide grin plastered on his face.

"Aww, you care!" He teases. Hitoshi simply blinks and takes another sip of his tea. Kaminari laughs and shakes his head, finally taking off his absurd feather hat. "Nothing's wrong, I promise." He uses his finger to make an 'X' over his chest.

Hitoshi reaches down and picks up what he assumes is a fruit. "You're shivering. Do you want to move closer to the fire?" Kaminari looks surprised, holding up a hand about a foot from his face. He watches as his fingers tremble.

"Oh, shit. I better go tell Zuzu!" He's about to push to his feet when Hitoshi reaches out. All



he does is place his hand over Kaminari's thigh, but it's enough to cause them both to flush. Hitoshi snatches his hand back, looking away towards the food.

"You sure you're okay?" He asks instead.

Kaminari makes a little flutter of a laugh, like a breath of air bubbling up from the depths of his chest. "I'm totally good. The shivering just means that a storm is moving toward us." Kaminari pushes himself to his feet, then stretches his arms over his head. "I'm not sparking or anything, so it'll just be rain. You really might want to set up your tent."

Hitoshi nods and goes back to picking at the food. Kaminari promises to be back, hurrying away but leaving his silly little hat. Hitoshi flicks the feather plume on the end and chuckles as it bounces. He's honestly only known Kaminari for a day, and this already just seems so... him.

When the food is halfway through and Hitoshi has almost finished the tea, he looks toward the fire, trying to catch sight of someone blond and energetic. It takes him... a lot longer to find Kaminari than he expects. He ends up having to pick up his bag, the tray, and both cups of tea before he catches sight of him. Walking closer to the now roaring fire, Hitoshi watches as Kaminari holds up a placating hand, the other rubbing the back of his neck as he...

Is he apologizing to one of the Fighters? The man looks like he's turning red with rage, and Hitoshi feels his grip on the tray of food loosen as his free hand drops to his whip. The mugs on the tray rattle, but before he can yank the braided cord out and crack it through the crowd, Kaminari ducks under a meaty fist of a swing and yanks off a glove.

It happens so fast that Hitoshi barely realizes anything even transpired. All Kaminari does is reach out and trail his fingers over the man's side. The brute seizes up, then drops like a rag doll to the ground. Kaminari huffs as people rush to his side, waving hands in front of his face and demanding he talk to them.

Hitoshi realizes they're crowding him, and he happily deposits the tray, minus Kaminari's mug, into the communal wash and pulls out his whip. This is entirely an abuse of his power, but he cracks the cord into the sky and people flinch and pull back because it sounds like thunder.

The space they give him is enough room for him to duck through the crowd and hook an arm under Kaminari's. He goes willingly when Hitoshi pulls him to his feet, and the two of them find a quiet space that's close enough to the fire but far enough from the crowds.



Hitoshi doesn't ask, simply tips the cup to Kaminari's lips as slowly as he can until muscle memory takes over and the other man starts drinking.

While Kaminari sits there, occasionally sipping cool tea, Hitoshi pulls his pack off and unties the ends for his tent. It's not really made to fit two, but he doesn't think Kaminari's going to have enough energy or foresight to put up his own. If he even has one. Hitoshi hasn't really seen Kaminari with a pack, now that he thinks about it.

Either way, Hitoshi sets up the tent around Kaminari, then crowds in next to him, the walls press to the tree and are held up with spikes in the ground. Somehow he gets Kaminari off his feet for a few minutes so he can lay the pallet down inside, then he helps him sit down when it's obvious that Kaminari has forgotten how to bend his knees.

He's seen magic overuse before, but this isn't it. Whatever this is, it's heavy and swimming through Kaminari like a fog. He's not entirely sure why he's so insistent on taking care of him, but... Hitoshi makes sure Kaminari finishes his tea, then puts the mug to the side. They sit together as the night grows darker and more fires are set up, the two of them watching the group outside their space, and somehow fall asleep leaning against one another.




The patter of raindrops wakes Hitoshi with a start, and his movement jerks Kaminari awake next.

"Wazit?" Kaminari slurs, wiping drool off his face with his still ungloved hand. Shit, Hitoshi didn't think to grab it in the crowd, it'll be gross and wet by now.

"Rain." He mumbles, reaching forward to pull back the tent flap. It's not heavy, in fact the sky is still mostly visible, but it's clear that everyone is hidden and sleepy save for those on watch. Hitoshi closes the flap and yawns, rubbing at his neck from the awkward position he dozed off in.

"Rain." Kaminari sighs dreamily, then stretches out and slides down until he's on his back. Hitoshi watches him go, then rolls his eyes and drags his bag over. "Thanks for earlier, by the way. Sometimes my magic can backfire. It doesn't happen as much as it used to, but the higher the power I put out, the more it scrambles my thoughts."

Hitoshi pauses, thinking of the blank look on Kaminari's face when he'd used Command on him. He feels... dirty all of a sudden. The ire that the dragon had directed at him makes much more sense in retrospect.



“You take care of me, I take care of you.” Hitoshi mutters before he pulls out his blanket. He throws it to Kaminari, then leans back against the tree.

“Oh! Since we’re adventure buddies! Right?” Kaminari laughs, already unfurling the blanket. “But you don’t have to worry too much about me, I could easily go get my pack from the wagons, I-”

“It’s raining, it’s probably covered.” Hitoshi counters him easily enough. “Just rest until the storm rolls through.” He closes his eyes to get comfortable again, but tenses up when he feels Kaminari scooting closer and draping the blanket over his lap. His eyes snap open and he looks down as the other man presses along his thigh.

“You should lay down, too.” Kaminari says thoughtfully. “And it’ll get cold with the fires out.”

Something twists inside of Hitoshi’s chest at the thought of laying flat next to Kaminari, but it isn’t bad. It’s more... sugary. How the hell does he describe it?

“I don’t want to be caught off guard.” He states instead.

“Uh huh, that’s why you have those bags under your eyes.” Kaminari’s eyes are closed, but he’s smirking as he throws his arms behind his head. “It’s totally from not wanting to be-”

Hitoshi shoves him by rocking his hips to the side. Kaminari laughs and it makes Hitoshi smile despite his best efforts not to. He pulls his mask up and closes his eyes again.


“Hey, you’re a bard, tell me a bard story.” He mutters, though it’s still clear through the fabric of his mask.

“Uhhh... real or fantasy?” Kaminari asks around a yawn.

Hitoshi shrugs. “Surprise me.”

Kaminari hums, the sound filling the space in a weird, thrumming way. Whatever he’s doing, it’s laced with a kind of warm magic that feels better than any of the fires had. Hitoshi shivers at the feel of the magic on his skin, opening his eyes very slowly. He doesn’t even have to turn his head to see the soft glow of crackling energy rippling along Kaminari’s skin.

“Alright.” Kaminari’s eyes open and he glows in the dark of their tent. He looks... Hitoshi swallows around the tight feeling in his throat.



He looks beautiful. Like an otherworldly fae, wreathed in lightning and the power of a raw storm, the black streak in his hair almost floating up.

“Do you know the story about The Sky’s Blush?” Kaminari asks, turning those glowing yellow eyes on Hitoshi with a sudden fondness that has his heart pounding.

He shakes his head no.

“Awesome, first time hearing it then.” Kaminari rolls to his side, propping himself up on one elbow. “So, the Goddess of the Sun rules the day, and the Goddess of the Moon rules the night. Every day the Sun will walk across the sky, smiling warmly at the world, and then at night the Moon will dance over the sky and fill the world with the cool breeze from her dress twirling in the clouds.’

‘The two Goddesses are madly in love, but duty keeps them apart. Still, love finds a way, because it’s more powerful than duty. So when the Sun is getting ready to sleep and the Moon creeps out into her sky, the Sun sees her in that short hour. And every time, no matter what, seeing the love of her life makes the Sun flush and blush, painting the sky with her love before she disappears into her chambers. Because even if it were only for a few minutes, seeing the one you love can change your entire world.’

Kaminari smiles up at Hitoshi’s silence. “Cute, right?”


Hitoshi shrugs. “Kind of cheesy.” He mutters.

That’s not what he really thinks though. In reality he thinks it’s absurdly romantic and he knows he’ll remember it forever. Remember the way each word sounded in Kaminari’s voice, the soft movement of his free hand as he spoke and twisted crackles of energy around his scarred hands.

The way their eyes had locked and Hitoshi’s heart had pounded when Kaminari had said the last line.

“I think you liked it, Mr. Mystery Man.” Kaminari teases, poking Hitoshi in the thigh. “I’ve got plenty, just let me know if you want another bedtime story.” He rolls over with a yawn and snuggles into the blanket.

Hitoshi stares into the night, flushed and trying not to react. “Shinsou, Hitoshi Shinsou.” He whispers into the night. He doesn’t know if Kaminari heard him or not.



The next few days pass much the same way. Kaminari and Hitoshi take up the rear of the camp. Kaminari talks Hitoshi's ear off while Hitoshi gives him short replies or shakes of his head, and they fit together. The people ahead of them are very obviously annoyed, but Hitoshi...

Well, he's actually grown used to the sound of Kaminari's voice. It's the spaces in between his tales and ramblings that Hitoshi dreads. Where he once craved silence, now it feels... unnerving.

They walk through the woods, take a lunch break, walk some more, call for camp, and the two of them set up Hitoshi's tent. Kaminari tells him a new story each night. They're always fantastical and filled with magic, and Hitoshi... sort of... falls in love with him.

Them! The stories! Not the guy! He just met him!

He...

"Oh! Shooting stars!" Kaminari tugs Hitoshi out of their tent and drags him through the field they're camping in. Everyone is out, staring at the sky, but Hitoshi can't stop looking at Kaminari. He's staring at this cosmic force under a black and purple lit sky, enamored with the way the light shoots through the clouds. "Have you ever seen anything so beautiful?" Kaminari asks, sounding fond.

Hitoshi can hear his heart roaring in his ears and he has to look away. "I... no, I haven't."

Movement catches his eye and he turns to see the dragon, Kiri, looking at him with raised eyebrows and a grin full of sharp teeth. His gaze flicks back to Kaminari, then back to Hitoshi, and he has the audacity to waggle his eyebrows.

Hitoshi looks away pointedly.

They sit close, backs warm by one of the fires, and for a long time everyone basks in silence. Hitoshi lets out a slow, deep breath, and when Kaminari puts a hand over his, he looks down at their joined fingers. Without thinking, he squeezes and looks up.

Kaminari's smiling at him, a knowing look on his face before he leans his head on Hitoshi's shoulder and gets comfortable.



Oh.

Oh no.

Oh no.

.....

The people ahead of him are two minutes away from getting a whip across the back of their skulls. They have been muttering about ‘That annoying blond’ for so long now that Kaminari’s gone quiet. Hitoshi hates it. He hates this silence full of tense remorse and the lack of laughter that’s made a home in his chest over the last few days.

He wants to scream, but screaming tends to ring in his blood and he... tries not to do that. So instead, he reaches down and grabs Kaminari’s hand.

“Hmm?” Kaminari stares at their joined palms. “Shinsou?” He seems confused, voice too soft, too quiet.

“Tell me a story.” He says, tugging Kaminari closer. “It’s too quiet, I don’t like it.”

Kaminari finally laughs, the tension creeps away despite the continued muttering ahead of them. “You’re a Rogue, isn’t silence sort of your thing?” Kaminari teases, swinging their hands between them.


“Not when you’re around.” Hitoshi admits. “Never if you’re around.” He doesn’t... mean for it to come out so adoring, but... well. “Your voice is like a symphony at this point.” Is that too forward?

Kaminari’s flushes from his scalp down to his collar. “Oh my gods.” He laughs, covering his face with one hand. “Shinsou!”

“Hitoshi.” He corrects, squeezing their fingers together. “You can call me Hitoshi.”

Kaminari breathes in sharply. “I... okay, Hitoshi.” He can’t stop smiling. “Only if you call me Denki.” Hitoshi nods and they come out of the woods and into another valley, this one surrounded by spires that mark the border.

The group spreads out, and as they get closer, Denki turns and puts himself between Hitoshi and the rest of the group.



“Hitoshi.” He sounds serious, determined, and it’s so endearing. “Go with us over the border.” There’s a... a pleading note in his voice. “Come with me. We can have adventures together and-”

“Yes.” Hitoshi stops the rambling and pulls his mask down. “I’ll go anywhere with you.”

Denki’s laughter is loud and excited. “Holy- really? Oh, I, I didn’t expect that to actually work.” His laughter turns nervous and Hitoshi rolls his eyes before he grabs both of Denki’s hands and pulls him in. He presses the briefest of kisses to his lips, causing him to flush all over.

“You’ve grown on me.” He smiles when Denki laughs again. “Like mold.”

“Aww, can’t I be a cute fungus instead?” Denki teases, still holding both of Hitoshi’s hands as he walks backwards towards the border.

“I... sure.” He mutters. “My cute fungus, or whatever.” He doesn’t look up when they call to stop the group.

This is where they would have split, where they would have parted ways and Denki would have taken half of Hitoshi’s heart with him into unknown lands, led by a brash blond and his dragon.

Now, instead of leaving empty, he’s going to explore an entirely new world with a full chest and laughter ringing in his soul.







KITTY LOVE

ASHE

Hitoshi lets out a sigh as he enters the cafe, a rush of cold air following him in. He orders the largest black coffee and asks for extra whipped cream on top, even though he's not the biggest fan of whipped cream in his coffee. That's for the cats.

When his order is ready, he grabs his drink and enters the second room, signing in to the sheet that tells the workers how long he has with the cats and hanging up his coat before looking around.

There are a handful of customers present and a couple of workers walking around, but more importantly, there are lots and lots of cats.

Hitoshi smiles softly to himself and makes eye contact with a long-haired calico staring at him from atop her tower. She stands and stretches before jumping down onto a large chair. She sits and continues to stare directly at Hitoshi.


"I think she likes you," the woman at the desk says. "She doesn't like many people and will be sad if you don't go pet her, and you wouldn't want to make her sad would you?" Mina, as her name tag suggests, pouts as she waves Hitoshi over to the cat waiting for him.

Hitoshi shakes his head and approaches the little queen, laughing softly when she stands and chirps, circling around once before jumping up onto her back legs and falling back down. She trills when he puts his hand on her head to scratch behind her ears, ignoring the fuzziness he feels when she leans into his touch.

This close, he's able to notice her one missing ear and one notched ear, her crooked whiskers, docked tail, and scarred skin around her eye and on her nose. Hitoshi frowns thinking of the life she must've lived before being picked up and taken to a safe place. But it's best not to think of those things.

He seats himself next to the demanding calico and scoops a bit of whipped cream on his finger for her to lick at. She gladly laps up the whipped cream before biting his finger.

"Ow!" Hitoshi yelps, more startled than anything. Then he chuckles. "Okay, okay, I have more." He moves his hand away and lets her shove her face forward, licking whipped cream directly from the source. He can't help but smile and pet her as she snacks.



When she's had her fill, there's still a hefty amount of whipped cream left, and she comes back with cream on her nose and all her whiskers. She licks her lips and without giving Hitoshi a chance to clean her up, she curls up in his lap with a soft purr.

When he doesn't immediately start petting her, she looks up at him and meows in a quiet, raspy voice, her eyes wide and pleading. Hitoshi could never say no to something so adorable and pathetic as that. He indulges the little lady and scratches her head, making her purr louder.

Hitoshi takes a drink of his coffee, a small amount of whipped cream making its way into the sip, and he looks around the room.

The Mina girl is watching him with a smile and gives him a thumbs up. He rolls his eyes and nods at her just as a blonde guy walks in. He hangs up his coat and waves at Mina with a cheery smile before bouncing over and past Hitoshi. He enters a small room and closes the door.

Hitoshi shrugs and takes another, larger drink of his coffee and shifts his attention back to the sleeping queen in his lap.


Soon enough, the blonde is returning from the room, but now he has an apron on, the pockets bulging with items Hitoshi is sure has something to do with animal care. He also has a name tag that reads "Denki" and is carrying a tub of cat food.

Denki goes around and fills each of the food bowls with kibble before refilling the empty water bowls.

It's then that he looks up at the top of the tower the calico was on when Hitoshi walked in and frowns. He looks over at Mina with furrowed brows and she grins and points to Hitoshi. Denki turns and looks at Hitoshi, smiling brightly when she sees the calico in his lap. He squeals and claps his hands together before approaching. Hitoshi narrows his eyes and frowns deeply, but this doesn't deter the blonde.

"Oh, my little Lady really likes you!" he exclaims before sitting down right next to the purple-haired man. "She doesn't like very many people, so she's been here a while. She doesn't like many of the other workers, either. But we're buddies, right Lady?"

The cat lifts her head up and looks at Denki with a chitter, making him laugh. He reaches into one of his pockets and pulls out a wet wipe.



“I see who the whipped cream is *really* for,” he says in a laugh.

Hitoshi grunts. “Is there a problem with that?”

“No, no, just make sure you don’t give her enough to make her sick!”

Hitoshi scoffs. “I would never.” He turns away from Denki again.

“You know,” Denki starts again. Hitoshi rolls his eyes and tries desperately not to sigh heavily. “We don’t really know what happened to Lady before she came here, but I’ve come up with my own story for her. Wanna hear?”

Hitoshi glares at Denki, but the blonde doesn’t look deterred. Hitoshi sighs, not even trying to hold back this time. “Fine.”

Denki brightens up even more and starts his story. “Well, I’d imagine Lady was like the leader of all the cats in her area. She fought off all the other cats that tried to take her place or hurt her loyal underlings. She was so badass, and still is, of course. Then, one day, another, somehow even more badass cat came and fought her off and took her place. She was so distraught after her defeat that she sneakily followed a human she knew she could trust to their work one morning. Said human finally noticed her once his walk was over and immediately took her to the vet. Once she was treated, the human took her back to his work where she remained and still waits to be adopted.” Denki smiles proudly at the end of his story.

“Let me guess,” Hitoshi deadpans, “the human was you?”

“Yep!” Denki gives a thumbs up.

“She’s lived quite the life, then,” Hitoshi comments.

“Yes, a queen in every right. She’s even become a bit of a leader around here. Her second in command is Dreamsicle,” he points to an orange tabby tuxedo watching them closely. He waves at the cat and it turns its head away. “Wanna know why her name is Lady?”

“Why?”

“Because she’s just so elegant. A little lady, one might say.” Denki looks proud of himself. “I named her. She answers to her name, too! Go on, try it!” He looks at Hitoshi eagerly. Hitoshi looks down at the cat in his lap, only to see she’d fallen back asleep.

“I don’t want to wake her,” he grumbles.

Denki laughs. “Of course not.”



After a few moments of silence, Denki speaks up again, his voice solemn.

“Are you thinking of taking her home? In all honesty, she’s been here a while and we’ll have to send her to the shelter if she’s not adopted soon. I can’t have pets in my apartment, or I would’ve taken her home day one.”

Hitoshi looks down at Lady and hums softly. “I wasn’t planning on adopting today,” he says. “I don’t have any supplies for a cat, either...”

“Oh!” Denki perks back up. “If you fill out the paperwork we could hold her here for you while you get your place ready and then pick her up to take her home within a week!”

Hitoshi nods. He scoops Lady up in his arms and approaches the front desk, leaving Denki sitting in his spot in slight confusion.

Lady is set gently on the counter and Hitoshi says, “I want this one, but I can’t bring her home today.”

Hitoshi finds Mina’s grin deeply unsettling as she grabs the paperwork for him to fill out. “What’s that look for?” Hitoshi questions.

“What look?” Mina responds, making Hitoshi shake his head.

“Nevermind,” he says with a sigh, signing his name on the papers.

“See you next week!” Mina calls as Hitoshi says goodbye to Lady with a kiss on her nose and grabs his coat to leave.

As soon as Hitoshi gets home, he opens up his computer and researches everything a cat may need. He finds the best food brands and the sturdiest cat towers and the most fun cat toys and he makes a list. The next day, he goes out and buys everything he can.

When he gets home, he orders what wasn’t in the stores and starts finding the perfect places for all the cat furniture, setting up what needs to be set up.

The next few days, his orders come in and he has everything set up for Lady within the week.



Lady greets Hitoshi at the door when he returns exactly a week after his first visit.

“She’s been waiting for you!” Mina says, leaning her elbows on the counter with a smirk. “And so has Denki,” she adds slyly.

Speaking of Denki, he appears out of the storeroom just as Mina’s finished speaking. He makes eye contact with Hitoshi and brightens up, rushing back into the storeroom and re-emerging with a yellow crate.

“Hey!” he greets, coming forward as Hitoshi leans down to pick up the attention-seeking kitty at his feet. She immediately starts purring happily as soon as she’s settled in her new dad’s arms.

Lady is set on the counter as Hitoshi fills out the last of the paperwork. Denki gives her some love in their final moments together before her brand new purple bedazzled collar is clipped on.

“Hey!” Denki suddenly exclaims, startling Hitoshi, who looks at him questioningly. “Why don’t I give you my number so you can keep me updated on how Lady is doing!”

They both shoot Mina a glare when she giggles and mutters a, “Sure that’s the *only* reason?” under her breath as she types away on her phone.

Hitoshi is unsure, but he remembers how clear it was that Denki cares deeply for Lady and caves at the puppy eyes he’s given.

“Yeah, sure,” he sighs, forcing down a smile at the way Denki lights up and scrambles for a piece of paper before seeming to remember something and grabs a notebook and pen from his apron. He flips a few pages before finding a blank one and scribbling something down. He rips out the page and hands it to Hitoshi with a cute smile that definitely *doesn’t* make Hitoshi blush.


The paper gets stuffed in Hitoshi’s pocket until later and he picks up Lady in her crate with one hand and his paperwork in the other, waving goodbye as he heads to the door.

On his way out he hears Mina say, “I’ve been live texting this whole thing to Sero, by the way.” He shakes his head and buckles Lady’s crate into the backseat of his car.

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When they get home, Lady makes quick work of leaving her crate and exploring, Hitoshi following from a distance. He wants to make sure she's safe and not getting into anything she shouldn't be while not crowding her.

She ends up curled up in the pillows and blankets of Hitoshi's bay window and he makes sure to snap a picture before remembering the number in his pocket.

He takes out the paper and reads "Kaminari Denki" with a lightning bolt next to it above a phone number.

He plugs it into his phone with the lightning emoji next to his name, just like on the paper, before sending the picture he took with the message, 'She's really made herself at home.'

Hitoshi is about to lock his phone and put it away before the tag switches to 'read' and it says Denki is typing.

'Adorable!'

The message is followed by some emojis and not long after another message pops up.

'I'm so glad she's finally found a furever home she can be happy with!'

Then another.

'Thanks for providing her with one. I'm glad it was you!'

Then another.

'Because you seem like you'll make a great cat dad, I mean!'

And then three more, one right after the other.

'And you got my joke right?'

'FUR-ever home'

'Like forever but with fur because she's a cat'

The message is followed by a separate message consisting solely of cat emojis.



Normally, this is something that would annoy Hitoshi, but instead, he can't help but laugh.

Though, he makes a point to send his response all in one text.

'Isn't she the cutest? I'm glad I was the one to give her a home, too. I'll be the best cat dad to her. And yes, I did get your joke.'

Denki replies with some happy face emojis then another message saying, 'Gotta get back to work give Lady a kiss for me!'

'Will do,' Hitoshi responds before doing just that. He can't help but smile at the noise he gets in response.

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The next day, Hitoshi pulls out every single one of Lady's toys to see which one is her favorite. He records her batting and sniffing at most of them before her eyes zero in on a semi-realistic looking mouse toy and she pounces.

The toy doesn't stand a chance when Lady grips it tight and shakes it, really make sure it's dead.

Hitoshi startles a bit when Lady suddenly darts to the top of her cat tower with the toy in her mouth. It's hanging out of her mouth by the tail and Hitoshi can't resist taking a picture.

Without even thinking, he sends it to Denki with the message, 'She's found her favorite toy...'

Then Hitoshi takes a picture of all the toys he bought her and grabs a cat wand with a similar mouse hanging from the string to try and entice her to play.

Lady, of course, takes the bait and Hitoshi forgets about the message he sent.

.....

It isn't until later that Hitoshi checks his phone and sees the replies.

'Omg so cute!!'

'Is it a catnip toy?'



‘What kind of toys did you get her?’

Hitoshi attaches the picture of all the toys and types, ‘Not a catnip toy, I think she just likes mice. But here’s a pic of all her toys.’

And when the answer is almost immediate, Hitoshi comes to the conclusion that Denki is not only an extremely fast typer, but also just sits and stares at his phone when having a conversation.

‘Gasp! You’re spoiling her!!’

Hitoshi laughs, then laughs some more when no more responses come through.

‘Did I shock you into silence? I’ll also let you know that while she free feeds dry food, she also gets wet food every morning for breakfast. AND she has a drinking fountain.’

Denki’s response is simply exclamation marks, making Hitoshi smirk.

‘Only the best for my baby.’

Denki’s response makes Hitoshi blush, not that he’d ever admit it.

‘I knew you’d make an amazing cat dad!’

Though, it’s the heart eyes that make him rub the back of his neck.


‘Haha, thanks.’

Denki sends back a thumbs-up emoji and Hitoshi lets that be the end of the conversation



A couple of mornings later, Hitoshi walks into the kitchen to find Lady sitting proudly on top of the fridge taking a bath. There’s a cereal box on the floor, cereal spilling out of it.

Hitoshi quickly snaps a picture before letting out a stern, “Get down!” and approaching Lady, stomping his feet to try and get her to hop down.



He ends up having to get her down himself.

He cleans up the cereal and types out a message to Denki with the picture attached.

‘Woke up to this...’

The two have been talking more often. Less about Lady and more about themselves and each other. Hitoshi has learned quite about “The Bakusquad” from their conversations.

It doesn’t take long for Denki to respond with, ‘OMG your poor cereal!’

Hitoshi can’t help but chuckle as he turns on the coffee maker.

‘Quite the casualty, huh?’ he sends back.

Three messages are sent one right after the other at an inhuman speed.

‘A tragedy, truly.’

‘HEY!’

‘I just had an AMAZING idea!!!’

Hitoshi’s eyebrows raise and he only hesitates a little before asking what the idea is.

‘I’m so glad you asked.’

“Oh no,” Hitoshi says to himself, making his coffee while he waits for Denki to finish typing.

He’s honestly a little worried as to why the blonde is taking so long.

‘I should come over to say hello to Lady in her new home.’

Hitoshi chokes on his black coffee a bit. He has to take a few moments to compose himself before he can even think up a response.

He decides to try for a nonchalant approach.

‘Yeah, I think she’d like that.’

After setting up a time, Denki tries to kill Hitoshi again by sending, ‘It’s a date!’



When Hitoshi's heartbeat won't calm down, he realizes.

Oh.

He loves Denki Kaminari.

.....

Hitoshi learns how to make burgers just for his "date" with Denki. The blonde had told him previously how much he enjoys American food and Hitoshi wants to make some for him. Except that his doorbell rings a whole twenty minutes early.

"Sorry, I'm early," Denki apologizes as soon as Hitoshi opens his door. "I was trying not to be late, which I usually am, but I ended up being early."

Denki's nervous laugh makes Hitoshi have to hold back a smile.

"It's fine," he says, his voice cracking a bit. He clears his throat before continuing. "I just started dinner, though." He was hoping to have it finished just in time for Denki to get there, but that didn't quite work out the way he'd planned.

Denki sniffs the air and asks, "Oooh, what are we having?"

Hitoshi opens his mouth to answer before Lady comes running. She skids to a stop by Hitoshi and literally jumps into Denki's arms with a happy mew.

Denki tosses his head back with a laugh and Hitoshi chuckles. "I think she missed you," he comments.


"Yeah, I guess I'll have to visit more often," Denki says with a wink. "Or just move in," he jokes.

Hitoshi rolls his eyes but can't help the way his heart twists at the words.

"Come on, let's go in. I don't want you standing in my doorway anymore."

And Denki happily complies, kicking off his shoes and following Hitoshi into the living room, all while not putting down the purring kitty.

"I'll be in the kitchen right over there if you need me," Hitoshi says, pointing in the direction of the kitchen. He leaves to finish cooking when Denki smiles and nods.



He can't help the heat that rises to his cheeks when he sees Denki's bright smile. He just hopes he turned around fast enough that the blonde didn't see it.

He's not confident.

Still, he moves to the kitchen to get started on the food.

He's mildly distracted by Denki telling Lady about what she's missed since leaving the cafe and he can't help but smile down at the sizzling hamburgers while he strains to hear the blonde over the sound of the air fryer cooking the fries.

"Oh! That's right, Static and Big Guy were adopted yesterday! They'll be going to a good home and we can try bringing Rusty back to the cafe now! Hey, Lady, are you listening? This is important stuff."

Lady murmurs and Hitoshi decides to stop listening in when he nearly burns the food.

After that, it doesn't take long for the burgers to be ready and he adds all of Denki's favorites to his, while having his own plain.

He plates everything and brings it out to Denki, making sure to grab drinks as well.

Denki's eyes widen when he sees what's for dinner and nearly bounces in his seat.

"You made my favorite!" he exclaims, and Hitoshi swears he sees stars in his eyes.


"Yeah, I figured I'd make something I know you like," Hitoshi explains, rubbing the back of his neck.

Hitoshi sets the plates down on the coffee table and sits on the floor. Denki carefully slides Lady off his lap and sits down across from Hitoshi.

He takes one bite of his burger and his eyes widen.

"This is really good," he exclaims with his mouth full.

"I'm glad you like it," Hitoshi responds before taking a bite of his own. He hides a smile behind his burger.



“And so Bakugou smacked him! Right there in front of everyone!” Denki finished his story with a laugh.

They’d finished eating a long while ago and had spent the rest of the time talking.

“Hey, what time is it now?” Denki asks, grabbing his phone and checking before Hitoshi has the chance to answer. “Oh shit! It’s like, super late, I gotta go!”

Denki abruptly stands, startling Lady from her peaceful sleep between her two favorite people. She yawns and stretches before looking up at the now standing blonde with a frustrated look.

Denki sighs and scratches behind her ears.

“Goodbye, Lady, convince your dad to let me come back and visit, will ya?”

Hitoshi laughs, ‘Like it’ll take much convincing,’ he thinks to himself.

He, too, stands and walks Denki to the door.

“I had a good time today,” Hitoshi says nervously as Denki slips on and ties his shoes.

He stands back up and smiles brightly. “Me too, thanks for letting me come over! And for cooking me the best burger ever!”

Hitoshi laughs. “There’s no way it was the best, but thanks for the compliment. It was a pleasure to have you over. And it made Lady really happy.”

Hitoshi moves forward until he’s standing just in front of Denki and before he can even think, his hands are cupping the blonde’s cheeks and he’s kissing him.

Denki immediately melts and rests his hands on Hitoshi’s chest.

They pull back with smiles on both their faces. Hitoshi laughs nervously. “You’re welcome to come back anytime,” he says, attempting to play it cool. “Or maybe I can take you on a proper date.”

Denki bites his bottom lip and his eyes sparkle. “I’d love that,” he says.



FANCY MEETING YOU HERE

AKABANE KAYO

For the first time since he could remember, Hitoshi was excited to start his morning routine. He had a date. He finally asked someone out. *He really did it!* Even if that someone had to be *Monoma* of all people.

Monoma was just someone that occasionally sat next to him during their Contemporary Art class on Wednesdays. They've only exchanged a few words between lectures so he didn't particularly like Monoma that way. He was only tolerable at times when he wasn't raving about something superficial and the like. So he wasn't sure what drove him to suddenly ask the blond out on a date. Whether it was a sudden step of courage or stupidity, Hitoshi wasn't sure himself.

Monoma's blue eyes had gone comically wide as soon as the question slipped from Hitoshi's lips. Although he looked quite skeptical, he had agreed to the date and that was good enough for him.

Hitoshi quickly tore a page in his notepad to write down his phone number. He handed it to Monoma, telling the blond to call him so they could agree on a time and place for their date. Monoma only nodded in response as he gripped the small piece of paper in his hands.


To be honest, Hitoshi didn't expect to hear anything from Monoma after he asked him out like that so suddenly. So by the end of the day, he was quite bewildered when he got a call from an unknown number.

"This is Shinsou Hitoshi. May I ask who's calling?" He answered almost mechanically, focusing more on walking back to the dorms.

"I didn't think you were handing out your number to just anyone, Shinsou-kun." He was so shocked to hear the blond's voice over the phone that he walked right into a lamp post. He chose to ignore a giggling girl passing by as he listened to Monoma talk. "I was calling to talk about the date. Oh, but it's fine if you would prefer to cancel. You seemed busy, after all."

"I just... wasn't sure I would be hearing from you so soon." Hitoshi said, unsure.

"Well if you say so." Monoma hummed. "So you ready to go on a date with a hot blond?" Hitoshi couldn't stop the chuckle at that overconfidence.



They talked for a while, planning what they wanted to do. Hitoshi was surprised that it was actually nice talking to Monoma. By the end of the call, both had agreed to meet around 5pm on Friday at a restaurant near campus.

Hitoshi didn't want to admit it but he was excited.

.....

Come Friday morning and Izuku couldn't help bombarding him with questions on their way to their next class. This was what Hitoshi got after letting it slip that he had a date later today.

"A date? You're going on a date? Since when were you interested in dating? I honestly thought you weren't interested in all that stuff. Wait. Why did you ask Monoma of all people? I thought you had good taste, Shinsou-kun."

"Excuse you, I do have good taste." He said, avoiding the first few questions entirely.

"Then why Monoma? No offense but based on the stories about him, even I can tell he's... an asshole," His roommate grumbled under his breath.

"He's not an *asshole*." Hitoshi answered. *You know. Like a liar.*

"Sure, he isn't." He never thought he'd see the day Izuku would scrunch his face in mild disgust

"He's not that bad." Hitoshi tried again.

Izuku didn't even look a little bit convinced. "He's what Kacchan calls a *copycat cuntbag*. Or a *pasty faced parrot*. He might tend to exaggerate things but I'll trust him on this one."

"Oh come on. Give the guy a chance." Hitoshi didn't seem convinced himself, if he was being completely honest.

But the bell just rang and they were both going to be late for the next period if they didn't get going already. They didn't want to know what Professor Aizawa would do if they were late, so they hurried to class, leaving the conversation just like that.

.....

As soon as his English Literature professor ended his final class of the day, Hitoshi sprinted as



fast as he could to his dorm across campus to freshen up for his date.

Looking at the clock on his nightstand, he saw that he had almost two full hours to get ready. Realistically, that was more than enough time to prepare but the anxiety was already starting to build up in the pit of his stomach.

He tried (*god he tried*) to drown his worries in the fifteen minutes he was in the shower, and yet he was still having second thoughts afterward.

He knew that it was just Monoma he was going on a date with. But this was still a date. *A date.*

Oh my god. I've never gone on a date before. Am I really doing this?

Taking a deep breath to calm his racing heart, he looked at all the clothes he had in his closet to see what he could wear. It took a lot longer than he realized for him to lay out his options, but he finally decided to go for a simple black turtle neck that showed his arms just right and his nicest pair of pants that, according to Katsuki, made his ass look amazing as fuck.

Hitoshi usually didn't believe what came out of the explosive blond's mouth considering that it was almost always something offensive but even Izuku had agreed with him. He insisted that if anyone knew clothes, it was Kacchan. Hitoshi tried hard to believe his roommate who he knew would never lie to him but Katsuki always wore black and baggy clothes just like him. Although his ass does look pretty amazing in these pants so he'll believe the two best friends for now.

Looking at his reflection in the mirror, he sighed in frustration once again as he kept trying to tame his crazy hair. He had tried every hair product on the dresser (and he could already hear the lecture Izuku would tell him about touching another person's belongings when he got back) but his hair felt even messier than usual, so he needed to do whatever it took to fix his hair. Yet it *still* wasn't cooperating with him, even after he used up all the fancy gel they had, so he just did what he could and accepted the fact that his hair was just cursed like that.

With only half an hour before the agreed time they would meet, Hitoshi prepared to leave for the restaurant. He wanted to be early, even if the place was just a fifteen minute walk from his dorm.

He stared at his reflection in the bedroom mirror, finally deeming himself as presentable as he could get for his date. With one last deep breath, he asked himself:



What's the worst that could happen?

Maybe it really was Hitoshi's fault for even thinking it was a good idea to ask Monoma out.

It was clear (in fact, it was very clear) that it was not a good idea, now that Hitoshi had found himself sitting alone in the middle of the busy restaurant for nearly an hour. Monoma told him that he was looking forward to tonight so Hitoshi wanted to have faith in him.

Hitoshi tried his best to smile at the waitress who checked up on his table every now and then to see if he was ready to order yet. Hoping Monoma was just really late for some reason he couldn't tell him immediately, he swallowed down his growing anxieties with a sip of his water and asked for more time. The waitress smiled at him too widely for his liking and walked away without another word.

He continued to fiddle with his phone, constantly checking if he had a new message or call from Monoma. Being faced with his empty lock screen only made him grow more irritated every time he looked at it. He decided to order some fries to distract himself from his thoughts.


After another half hour, Hitoshi couldn't handle all the people staring at him with those pitying eyes anymore. The reality that he was stood up finally sunk in and he was feeling pathetic about the whole situation now.

Monoma thought that this date was a fucking joke. Fine then. Who cares about that asshole? Certainly not me.

Hitoshi had just decided that he would order take out and lock himself in his apartment all night watching murder documentaries, when someone sat down in the seat across from him.

The first thing that came to mind was *how dare this person look so fuckin cute in those clothes.*

He blinked in confusion as the blond stranger across the table smiled at him apologetically and said, "Sorry I'm really late, *babe*. My day has been absolutely awful and I swear that our date was the only thing keeping me going. You won't believe how crazy traffic was getting here. Then Mina kept calling me to remind me about our final in History next week for some reason and..."



The stranger seemed to contemplate for a moment before he gently grabbed his hand from across the table, leaning in to quietly say to him, “I’m Denki. Just go with it, yeah?”

Hitoshi couldn’t believe this stranger—Denki—was actually going out of his way to do something like this for him. It was actually really... sweet.

He turned his hand to slot their fingers together as he said, “I’m uhh... Hitoshi. Thanks for doing this for me. I really appreciate it.” He tightened his grip on Denki’s hand and the blond’s face lit up with a smile. He could feel his face heating up already.

“No problem, dude. Whoever didn’t bother showing up is like one of the biggest idiots in history.” Hitoshi gave a small smirk at that and Denki smiled again. He couldn’t help but be blinded by that bright smile. Denki was like sunshine incarnate.

Denki didn’t let go of his hand when the waitress came to their table with a large smile on her face and asked them if they were finally ready to order. Hitoshi couldn’t look her in the eye anymore as he was embarrassed about the whole situation so he just nodded in agreement when Denki asked him if he wanted some garlic bread with his pasta.

He only stared at the space between them where his hand laid comfortably holding Denki’s smaller one. Hitoshi lifted his eyes to see that Denki was tucking a strand of his hair behind his ear while talking to the waitress. Looking closely, Hitoshi could see a black lightning-shaped streak in his golden hair. As he wondered what the story behind that was, golden eyes met his and for a moment, Hitoshi was left breathless with how gorgeous Denki looked in the soft lights.

Once the waitress left the two alone, Denki gave his hand one last squeeze before he let go of his hand. Hitoshi already found himself missing the blond’s warmth.

He swallowed nervously, embarrassed because he was awful at small talk, but he was even more worried that he would be stuck in an uncomfortable silence with this pretty boy who decided to help him out of pity. That didn’t seem to be a problem for Denki, however, as he talked enough for the both of them.

Denki liked to talk about his three roommates a lot. Apparently, they were his “best bros” from high school and when they all had managed to pass at the same university, they decided to live together to save cash.

Hitoshi found it hard to fully believe when Denki said he didn’t regret living with his bros at all. Especially when Denki looked so offended when he told Hitoshi about two of them, *Kiri*



and Bakubro as he recalled, flirting right in front of his salad. Or when his “bestest” bro - Sero was it? - wouldn’t stop talking about whatever Iida was doing that never failed to make him smile.

Hitoshi might have lost his chance to ask if this was the same Iida he knew that always seemed to insist on being serious all the time. Denki went on saying that he was absolutely losing his mind over how such intelligent people could be reduced to idiots by love.

The waitress came back with their food while Denki was talking about the crazy dare he did during a party at Sero’s that summer that apparently had Mina rolling on the floor laughing. She placed their plates in front of them as she said, “Enjoy your food!”

Denki had already taken a bite of his pizza, but he gave her a large smile and said, “Thanks, you too!”

Hitoshi raised a questioning eyebrow at him. The blond then realized what came out of his mouth and he proceeded to drink a glass of water to hide his stupidity. Hitoshi couldn’t help but chuckle at the blond’s distress.

He seemed to be a naturally bright and happy person, but there he was, nervously wringing his hands all embarrassed because he was being nice to the waitress like a normal person. Just how adorable can he get. Wait... what?!

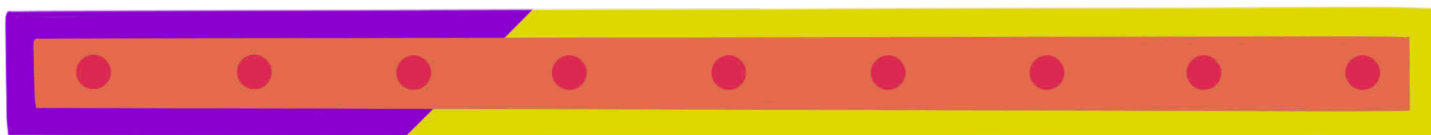
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Denki didn’t stop talking, Hitoshi concluded not even halfway through dinner. He didn’t mind that the blond talked a lot, since the stories of his (interesting and admittedly idiotic) adventures with his best bros kept becoming more and more amusing by the second. Hitoshi had to admit that it was strangely endearing to hear about these people acting like idiots.

“Thanks for tonight. You really saved my evening,” Hitoshi said as the waitress arrived with their dessert. The smile on Denki’s face grew as she placed the tiramisu and strawberry cheesecake on their table.

Once the waitress was gone, Hitoshi pushed the shortcake closer to the blond. He couldn’t help the small smile on his face as Denki’s eyes sparkled with glee when he took a bite.

“Like I said before, no problem dude.” Denki waved his fork around. “A guy like you doesn’t deserve to spend dinner alone. You seem pretty cool, you know. I’m just glad I got to help you out.” The blond leaned back on his seat and smiled yet again. Hitoshi pretended that he didn’t



feel his heart skip a beat. He coughed to hide the blush on his face as he nearly moaned when he ate a spoonful of his tiramisu.

“How will you tell your... partner that you went on a date with someone you just met?” He asked out of curiosity. *Surely someone as cute as Denki had a significant other, right?*

Denki went into a coughing fit, making Hitoshi worry he might have somehow choked on his cheesecake. He moved to help but the blond waved his hand dismissively. He calmed his breathing before he stuttered out a reply. “I’m uhh not dating anyone at the moment. I mean technically this is a date and we’re dating right now. Wait, but it’s not like that kind of date, right? Unless you want it to be? Uhhh, wait, what was I talking about? I don’t have a partner; No boyfriend or girlfriend. So yeah.”

“Oh. Well... I’m still sorry you had to spend your Friday night with me.” Hitoshi sheepishly rubbed the back of his neck, ears burning in embarrassment.

“Are you kidding me? This is the most fun I’ve had in weeks! I mean, I love my bros from the bottom of my heart, I really do, but it’s been nice to take a break from listening to Sero’s never ending pining for Iida and from being the third wheel in Kiri and Bakubro’s dates. The last Friday night I really enjoyed was when Mina and I went clubbing in the city. Ah, Mina is a friend of mine and she’s basically one of the bros too since she’s always been with us since high school. Anyway, that night was really fun and...”

They continued their conversation like that; the matter at hand easily forgotten. Talking to Denki was turning out to be very easy and very fun, actually.


Hitoshi was so distracted by the electrifying blond in front of him that he didn’t even notice that he was smiling by the end of the night.

When the time came to pay for dinner, Denki even insisted in paying for himself. “Hitoshi,” the blond pouted, “I told you already that you don’t have to pay for my food!”

He shook his head, giving the blonde a grin. “And you didn’t have to save my pitiful self when my date bailed on me but here we are, Denki.”

Denki huffed, opening his mouth again as if to argue even more but Hitoshi immediately cut him off.

“It’s the least I can do for you. As thanks for saving my evening. I just... really had fun with you tonight,” he said with a small smile.



Denki seemed to forget whatever he was about to say at Hitoshi's words and he didn't argue any further than that.

Hitoshi held the door open for Denki as they made their way outside the restaurant, making sure to do an exaggerated bow. The blond giggled at the sudden show of chivalry and Hitoshi couldn't help but notice the bright blush that bloomed across Denki's cheeks.

They stayed outside the restaurant, not wanting to part with the other just yet. The nearby establishments were filled with people having fun and enjoying themselves this Friday night. The busy workers and students passed in a rush around them. Yet Hitoshi and Denki stayed unmoving from where they stood side by side.

"Are you heading home for the night after this?" Hitoshi found himself asking after a moment of silence between them.

"Yeah dude. I've been debating if I should continue reading the book we had to read for one of my classes." He said as he shoved his hands in the pockets of his hoodie.

"Huh..." He glanced at what the blond said.

"What?" Denki glanced back at him looking worried for some reason.

"Oh sorry. I just didn't see you as the type to read in advance for classes. Or study at all. No offense!" He chuckled and was glad to see Denki laughing too.


"Pffft trust me. You're right. I'm really not that type of student. I just, uhh... really like this class I'm taking. And hey, it's actually a pretty good book!" Hitoshi immediately noticed Denki rub the back of his neck, a nervous habit he often did himself.

"Are you embarrassed over liking a class? I think it's great you have something you're passionate about." Hitoshi said, hoping that would help ease the blond's sudden nervousness.

"Aw thanks, man. That means a lot to me." He was glad to see Denki give him another smile, his cheeks flushing in embarrassment.

"Shall I walk you home, Denki?" Hitoshi felt the need to ask him, wanting to spend more time with the eccentric blond.

Denki looked down at the dirty pavement, obviously caught off guard with the offer. "Oh, but you don't have to do that. I can handle myself just fine."



“I know that. I just want to.” Hitoshi surprised himself with how fast he replied. “I told you it’s the least I could do for you for accompanying me tonight.”

Those golden eyes looked up at him questioningly as if they were searching for something in his face. The blond didn’t say anything else and started walking towards what Hitoshi hoped was his house.

They walked along the streets of the city side by side. The air seemed colder than usual, but Hitoshi hardly noticed the cool temperature.

Denki talked a lot during their walk. He talked about the book he was reading, the extra lessons he was taking and Hitoshi didn’t mind listening to it all. Hearing the blond’s voice was quite soothing to hear in the chaos of the streets at night.

He knew it was cheesy but he couldn’t help thinking that nothing else could compare to Denki’s bright smile as he looked up at the stars that sparkle in the night skies above them.

After a few more minutes of walking, the blond stopped in front of an apartment across a well known coffee shop. Hitoshi stopped too, just a few steps behind him.

The shorter boy turned around, startling Hitoshi as he marched up to him only to meekly grab his sleeve. He fought back the blush that threatened to color his cheeks as Denki looked at him from underneath his eyelashes. Hitoshi tried to ignore just how close they were but he was much too distracted by the freckles on the blond’s cheeks.

“Umm... Hitoshi?” His voice was soft and quiet. It felt wrong to see the blond look so small and shy like this, with how loud and proud he was all evening.

“Yeah?” He asked, his voice just as soft, thinking it would ruin the moment he was having with Denki if he was too loud.

“You uhh... you wouldn’t mind doing this again with me, would you?” Hitoshi raised his eyebrow at the question. “I just thought that you’re a really cool dude, you know? And it would be nice if we could hang out again. What do you say?”

Hitoshi just stared at him for a moment, not believing Denki would want to go on another date with him.

But the way he was looking at him so earnestly made him think again. After spending a short time with the blond, he came to understand that Denki wasn’t the kind of person that would



do anything to hurt someone else intentionally.

He smiled and took Denki's hands in his. "I would love to."

.....

As Mina sat at a table at the coffee shop feeling content with finally getting her pumpkin spice latte, she spotted her best friend outside. She knew it was Denki right away, even if he wasn't fully facing her cause only one person would ask her to dye that ridiculous black streak in their blond hair.

She could see him talking to a tall boy with crazy purple hair and... *Wait- crazy purple hair AND dark circles under dark, purple eyes - don't tell me this is the Mr. Yes Cat Denks kept telling me about?*

She could tell her friend was talking much more than he usually did, with how crazy his hands were moving all over the place. And that was saying a lot since this was Denki.

She saw the tall boy smile warmly at the boy's words and reached to hold the blond's smaller hands in his. She still couldn't see her best friend's face but she was absolutely sure that Denki was a blushing mess now that Mr. Yes Cat was smiling at him so kindly like that.

Like the great best friend that she was, Mina decided to come out and tease him just for a little bit.

"Kaminari Denki!" Her grin widened even more as he instantly let go of the other boy's hands upon hearing her voice. He whipped his head to glare at the grinning girl, his face as pink as her bubblegum hair.

She felt the blond flinch as she placed an arm around his shoulders but paid no mind to it. "Look at you. I knew you could get your man! Nice job!!" She said with a teasing smile on her face and the boy suddenly paled.

Hitoshi looked between Denki and the pink haired girl, confused. "What?! What does she mean by that?"

"Nothing! She means nothing by that!" Kaminari cried out, cheeks flushing in embarrassment as he shoved the girl away from him.

"Uh-huh. Who is this anyway? A friend of yours, I assume?" Hitoshi raised a questioning



eyebrow as the girl pressed up against Denki again.

“Hey there! Call me Mina!” She waved the hand that wasn’t thrown around Denki’s neck.

“AH YEAH! Mina is a friend of mine. She’s a friend! She’s part of the squad with Bakubro and Kiri and Sero. You remember when I was talking to you about them, right? She’s like my best friend.” The blond shut his mouth, as if realizing he had begun to ramble again.

“We’ll be taking our leave now. If you’ll excuse us.”

He tried to drag her away from Hitoshi before she did any more damage.

But Mina didn’t seem to get the message and still continued with a grin. “Actually, Denki has been crushing on you ever since he saw you in that cat cafe outside of campus. You were playing with the cats and his bi heart couldn’t handle seeing you talking to them.”

Hitoshi went red with those words. As if not believing that there was anyone that would actually take interest in him.

Denki blushed up to his ears with what his friend just said. “MINAAAAAAA. Oh my god. Stop talking please. You’re not helping.”


Mina continued talking, not caring about how the two boys reacted. “I remember Denki telling me about that one time the workers asked you why you like cats so much, and he said you look like you panicked and just said ‘*Yes, Cat.*’ He said he’s never fallen for anyone so hard, so fast in his goddamn life.” She said with a wide grin.

Denki’s face was flushed in embarrassment. “Why did you have to tell him that?! I can’t believe you’ve done this to me! How could you?!”

“Oh my god. He even knows about that ‘Yes, Cat’ moment.” Hitoshi mumbled, obviously embarrassed someone actually had to see that.

The two boys were red as tomatoes but Mina wasn’t done talking yet. “So my boy Denki has been crushing on you for awhile, right? But he never does anything and just stares at you from afar like a pining idiot. We always try to kick his ass for not doing anything all this time. So just imagine our surprise when Monoma comes in and tells us that he got Denki a hot date with you.”

Hitoshi’s face paled as he slowly connected the dots of what Monoma planned all along.



Mina blocked out Denki's continuous protests to just drop it and kept talking. "Of course we didn't believe him at first but Denki kept worrying that you really might be waiting for a certain blond. So he goes on wearing that horrid thing even if this might be his chance to talk to you and spend some time with you. And of course, you really had to be there looking amazing as fuck with those damn jeans of yours."

"My outfit isn't that bad!" Denki whined again as the girl grinned even more. "Honey, if Kat knew you went on a date wearing that worn out sweater, he would burn your clothes saying what's the fucking point of having them anyway." Denki winced at that, seeing as it was a very possible thing to happen.

Shinsou sheepishly coughed, thinking how he was supposed to react after hearing everything the pink girl said. "I don't know what to say."

"You don't have to say anything." The blond said, looking down on the ground.

"Um... So Monoma really stood me up so you could go on a date with me?" Hitoshi asked, straight to the point.


"I'm sorry. I was hoping you wouldn't find out about what Monoma did." Denki said underneath his breath, as if ashamed.

"I mean, it's fine I guess. He really didn't seem all that interested in me. I just wish he told me beforehand." He shrugged.

"I feel like I took advantage of you. I'm so sorry Hitoshi." The blond bowed his head.

"What are you saying? You did nothing like that. I, uh, actually really enjoyed tonight even if Monoma stood me up." Hitoshi rubbed the back of his neck. "I just don't understand why someone as bright and amazing as you would like boring old me."

Denki replied almost instantly, "Dude, what's not to like?! Excuse you, but you're plenty amazing yourself Hitoshi. I always see you playing with that little girl in the cat cafe and the small smile on your face whenever she plays with the kittens is so gorgeous that I thank all the gods for being alive to witness such a scene. We actually have some classes together and whenever I see you, you're always trying to do your best in everything you decide to do and I think that's amazing! You're smart and you're hard working and dear god, have you seen yourself lately? You're a whole damn meal and I'm surprised no one has eaten you up already cause-" Hitoshi stopped the blond from rambling with a hand to his mouth.



“I think I understand now.” His ears burning in embarrassment with every word he heard. Knowing Denki liked him to that extent had his head spinning

When Hitoshi removed his hand, Denki gave him a small smile, “So yeah. Now you know that I think you’re really really cute.”

“Why didn’t you tell me all of this before?” he asked.

“I had a feeling that you wouldn’t believe me either way.” Denki looked at him nervously. “I’m just not good at this sort of thing...”

Hitoshi stopped to think for a moment then said, “I’m not good at it either... guess we’ll have to learn together, huh?” He smiled slightly.

The blond’s head darted up as he stared at him with wide eyes. “Are you saying what I think you’re saying?”

“Go on a date with me, Denki?” Hitoshi said, shy but hopeful.

“You never had to ask,” Denki launched himself in the taller boy’s arms and stood on his tip-toes to press a light kiss to Hitoshi’s cheek.

They stood silent for a moment, smiling and happily getting lost in each other’s eyes with each passing second.

Until they realized that Mina had never left them alone. She gave them a smirk, “Took you long enough.”





Woah!! Hitoshi you
look so cute in this!

Stop bringing these
photos out! It's
embarrassing



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Runner up

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HONOURABLE MENTIONS

For their invaluable assistance in editing

@UnicornsNbutane

@Fluffy_Jessekun

@Senshibyne

MODS IN ABSENTIA

FOR ALL THE HARD WORK YOU DID
ALONG THE WAY

TRISH

COLDLY

FRAPPI



MOD SQWAD

ISCHEMIA

@Hey_There_Satan

Editor In Chief and King of the Possums, they have edited the fics in the zine. They've also been a rock in helping to keep track of everyone's submissions and answering questions on our server.

NYM

@SpawningArt

Our beloved Spoon. Nym has carried the torch that lit the fire of this zine since the beginning, and done much of the organising necessary for it to be here with you today.

KIKI

@Spicy_Kiki

Queen of Colour and the creator of our zine borders, backings and page-breakers, she has also helped post to twitter, write polls and answer your questions!

QUINT

@Quintessentila

"Goddess of the PDF" she helped to assemble all the beautiful art and wonderful stories together into this zine for you to read.